# PATSY from the WILDS

by May Wynne

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MAY WYNNE

Patsy O'Manlon, rebellious at being sent to school in England, had no sooner settled down after one or two madcap escapades than she found herself off on an exciting voyage to Sumatra. She found more excitement than she had bargained for, however, when she and her friend Carol Harless, separated from their travelling companion in a shipwreck, became involved in events on two lonely islands. And when she returned to school she was "Patsy from the Wilds" with a vengeance!

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# PATSY FROM THE WILDS

*By the same author*

KITS AT CLINTON COURT SCHOOL
THE GUIDE'S HONOUR, *etc.*

SHE CLIMBED THE STEEP PATH.

# PATSY FROM THE WILDS

*By*

MAY WYNNE

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# PATSY FROM THE WILDS

## CHAPTER I

### PATSY AT HOME

"MISS PATSY, Miss Patsy, shure, it's Tim Maloney has done it."

Down went Patsy's book, open was flung the window wider still, and two minutes later Patsy was racing across the weed-grown courtyard of Castle Kerraford to where the ragged figure of a small maiden, aged seven, stood, with bare feet and legs wide apart, a curly red head bowed low in grief.

"What is it then, Norah mavourneen?" asked the elder girl, catching the child in her arms and looking lovingly into the pretty, tear-stained face. "Tell me the tale of it, and I'll settle with Tim Maloney."

The child pointed a tragic finger towards a gaunt, grey tower, ruinous and roofless, which stood to the left of the castle itself.

"It's Kitsy," she moaned. "She's up there, the

poor wee thing, and—and she'll be killed if she falls."

Patsy made instant note. Yes, high up close to the broken turret of the tower a small kitten stood on a narrow ledge, mewing pitifully, whilst the mother cat at the foot of the tower tried vainly to reach the tiny prisoner. Patsy's sharp eyes also spied the hulking figure of Tim Maloney lurking near some bushes watching with glee the distress caused by his teasing.

Patsy was tall for her fourteen years, and there was more than an average amount of muscle in her slender arms. She acted promptly now.

"Stand there, Norah," she called. "Wait for me."

Straight across the yard she ran, and gripped some tough roots which had flourished for many years between the bricks of the tower. Up, up, she clambered, nimble as any cat. Up, up, with the spring breezes blowing her dark curls about her face and the pitiful mewing urging her to a difficult task every time she thought of faltering.

Yes, there was the kitten, peering down, its blue eyes wide with hope and baby wisdom. Sure, there was no need for Patsy to risk a fall by

stretching up a saving hand, for the little kit had made its leap on to her shoulder and clung there, no longer mewing but rubbing its soft back against her neck as though in gratitude.

Then Patsy began her climb down, triumphant though breathless. Ah! She had slipped then, and heard a scream of reproach in a well-known voice reaching her from an upper window of the castle. That would be Mary—the commander-in-chief of the household yonder where Patsy and her father lived in such happy-go-lucky fashion, with never a penny of money to spend and yet always with a copper to bestow on any who came to ask it.

Mary and her husband, Terence John, comprised the staff, and you may as well know there was no gardener in all Ireland who could grow finer vegetables or sweeter flowers than did Terry, whilst Mary cooked, washed, dusted—and scolded—to perfection. At least, so Sir Thomas O'Manlon told her.

Possibly Mary had not been *quite* so successful in her upbringing of motherless Patsy who had refused blandly but decidedly to be sent away to any English aunts, and had managed—with her father and Mary to help her—to grow into the

sweetest little wild hawk of a girl anyone could wish to see. Mary was the only one who ever scolded Patsy, but then she generally scolded Patsy's dad at the same time, blaming him for taking the sinner's part.

She was scolding now, though with a certain note of fear in the tones which might have made Patsy repent her act, had not the soft woolliness of the kitten's back reminded her of a life saved. And after all no bones were broken, though she did arrive rather hastily on terra firma.

"And it's no more than ye desarve," stormed Mary from above, "if ye've bruised your legs black and blue. It's mesil' is glad your father has decided to send ye to the English school right away."

Patsy scrambled to her feet. A thankless fairy with red curls was already vanishing from view, the kitten hugged in skinny arms, whilst Tim Maloney lolled in the archway. But Patsy had no thought now for kittens. Limping slightly, she hurried into the house and up the stairs to where Mary was busy with her work. Patsy, quivering in her anxiety and fear, voiced a breathless question.

"What nonsense are you talking, Mary Anna? What was it about an English school?"

She heard her own voice rising to a shrill note over the last words. The woman who had been busy with her broom paused, leaning her chin on the worn handle. She was still angry, because frightened, since she loved Patsy and had expected to see her killed before her eyes.

"It's just the truth," she retorted, "though it's the masther will be wanting to tell ye as soon as he has the courage for it. It's to school ye'll be going after Easter, a school in England, where ye'll learn the ways of a lady born as your swate mither before ye."

Patsy felt suddenly stiff—oh, it was a curious sensation which she could hardly describe! Mary Anna, watching, saw the girl's pretty, roguish face grow grave, suffering; the dark blue eyes stared in horror at her; the slender figure drooped so that the mop of dark curls veiled those white cheeks.

"I'll never," moaned Patsy. "I'll never! Dad knows that."

"Ye'd best tell him so then," said Mary, half relenting, "before I spend his whole fortune in clothes for yez."

Patsy could hardly believe her ears. Had Mary and Dad been planning this whole scheme to be rid of her? It was sure a bomb—and she reeled under the shock of it. And then the cheery sound of Dad's voice calling sent her down the wide old stairs like a bolt from the blue. There he stood, the finest, handsomest dad in the world, in spite of the fact that his fishing shirt was frayed, his gaiters worn, showing him as shabby as his surroundings. Patsy in her red frock made a vivid contrast by her youth and beauty. Without a word she launched herself into the arms of this best and dearest friend, clinging to him in speechless misery.

"It's not true," she pleaded, "it's not true."

Sir Thomas held her fast.

"So you know, mavourneen?" he asked. "After all, it's better you should."

"No, no," wailed Patsy, "it's not true. I'll never go, never, to an English school. I hate England. I hate everything outside Kerraford. It's home. And what would you do without me, Dad?"

Sir Thomas's heart was as tender as his nature was easy going. If he could have got out of telling the tale he had to tell he would have

been thankful. Patsy's swimming eyes pleaded so eloquently that almost he was crying, "Have it your own way!" But there was good reason for Patsy not to have her own way, and in a sort of desperate haste Sir Thomas blurted out the tale.

"I'll not be here alone, Patsy," he gabbled shamefacedly. "I'm off to New York on the fourth of May. I'll be marrying Sadie Wilson, the widow of Senator Wilson, whom I knew as a lad. She is the sweetest of women—and rich. She's coming to Castle Kerraford to make a home of it, and you are going just for a year to Mrs. Darlane at Hillingford in Devonshire. Mrs. Darlane was your mother's friend and is my own, too. She'll be teaching you a hundred and one things you ought to know, and you'll come here to find a mother awaiting you. Patsy girl, you'll be loyal to your dad? It means much to me. It will mean more if you are loyal."

But Patsy was not responsive. She had just been all and everything to her father for eight long years; he had been all and everything to her. And now he didn't want her because he was marrying a horrible American woman

who would spoil everything. Oh, yes, everything!

There was only one thing to do, and Patsy did it. Loosening her hold round her father's neck, she darted for the door and in less than two minutes was safe in that haunted glade known as the Leprechaun's Glen. Poor Patsy! There she lay, heedless of damp or chill, sobbing her heart out in this that she called the first great grief of her life since, when Mumsie died, she didn't understand. It's no use trying to write down all Patsy's foolish thoughts and feelings; you'll guess how overwhelming her self-pity was, and the worst of giving way to what was just selfishness showed itself on the girl's flushed face when she rose.

"I'm not going to cry any more," decided Patsy, "and—and I'm not going to rage. Dad's got to do what he likes. If he doesn't want me I must go, but, shure, I'll soon make the people in that English school wish they'd never, never, *never* had Patsy from the wilds!"

An impish spirit of defiance and dare-devilry seemed to have entered into the girl as she whispered to herself. Back went her curly head; she set her arms akimbo.

"I care for nobody, no, not I," she sang, "and no one—no one—oh, *nobody* cares for me!"

And Patsy concluded this very untrue declaration with a shower of tears.

## CHAPTER II

### PATSY GOES TO SCHOOL

A VERY forlorn Patsy O'Manlon came along the passage leading to the girls' bedrooms at Marcote Court. She had arrived at the English school.

There is no need to describe those last weeks of Patsy's life at Castle Kerraford. Mary Anna had become so sentimental that Patsy had quite longed to hear a scolding, and, oh, how hard it had been not to cry when all her village friends turned out of their cabins and huts to wish her good-bye! And now here she was—arrived safely. The boat had *not* gone to the bottom of the sea, the train had *not* obligingly leapt over the bank, there had been no adventure, no thrill from the moment she had said good-bye to Dad at the station till now. And now, having been kindly welcomed by Dad's old friend, Mrs. Darlane, and dismissed without the chance of displaying any of that rebel spirit of which she was half proud, she was on her way to No. 7 bed-

room, which she was to share with one Carol Harless who like the rest of the girls had arrived at school three days earlier.

It is annoying when you want your hand to be against that of everyone to find that aggressive paw seized and shaken in the spirit of brotherly love. Having no cause for complaint, Patsy had to find one, which of course she did.

"I hate sharing a room with anyone else," she muttered. "I'll never have a minute to myself. And this Carol is a prefect—and old—and a prig, I know she's a prig! I'll hate her."

She had reached No. 7 by now, and, opening the door, walked in. Someone who was already there turned to look at her. Patsy returned the scrutiny. Her room companion did not look very grown-up in spite of her sixteen years; she was tall and fair with a bright colour, clear grey eyes, and bobbed hair. She smiled at Patsy in friendly fashion.

"You are Patsy O'Manlon," she said. "And I am Carol Harless. I'm glad I was here when you came along. I can show you your cupboard and chest of drawers. Your luggage is here, but Nanny—Mrs. Bean—is busy, so you will have to unpack. Can I help you?"

Patsy, tired, forlorn, and near to tears, heard the friendly note and stiffened her back. If she softened she would be yielding to a good cry—and she would never do that. So up went her chin and hard grew those bright eyes.

"No, thank you," she retorted. "I'd rather unpack for myself. You'll be sorry I came, of course. I'm Patsy from the wilds, just a rough Irish girl who will be spoiling your term for you. It's not my fault. I didn't want to come, and I hope I shan't stop. I hate England."

Carol looked perplexed. The tirade was so unexpected, the speaker so desperate in her defiance, and Carol not quite old enough to understand.

"I'm sorry," she said more coldly. "Of course all that is nothing to do with me. Your people have sent you to school, and I should have thought it was up to you to play the game. Perhaps you'll feel more like it after tea. There's the bell."

Patsy heard the clanging, and tears were still nearer. At home Dad would be sitting all alone in his chair by the fire, with Rags and Patches the spaniels beside him, the three of them just lost without her. She must, must, return. She would never stop in this hateful place.

"I don't want tea," she managed to stammer. "I'll stay and unpack."

Carol hesitated, but the storm light in those blue eyes was unmistakable, and with a final shrug of the shoulders the elder girl left the room.

Patsy tugged furiously at the strap of her box, broke it by her own zeal, and, having unlocked, flung back the lid and with passionate haste turned all the contents out on to the floor. It was not much of an outfit, though Dad had told Mary to get all that was wanted, and the woman had done her best. Patsy cared little about clothes, which she bundled away hastily, and had almost finished when she came upon the photograph of Dad in his hunting kit. Dad! The dearest being on earth for all his failure towards herself! Dad—alone at Castle Kerraford—wanting her. Perhaps after all he would not be marrying his American widow, perhaps he would be alone and lonely all the long months. Oh, Dad, Dad!

The tears came so fast that Patsy could not stop them, sobs shook her as she sat huddled beside her empty trunk with Dad's photograph pressed to her heart, and it was here Carol found her—lying fast asleep, her cheeks still wet, when she

brought the tray with a dainty tea for the forlorn new-comer.

"Poor Patsy," whispered Carol, as she set down the tray and stooped over the sleeper, "how tired and sad she is! I hope one day she will let me be her friend, but it won't be easy. She is so much younger than I am—too young really to be my friend."

But, if Patsy were too young to be the equal and comrade to a prefect chosen by her fellow pupils for the honour before all others, it did not prevent Carol from lifting her up quite tenderly and laying her on the bed, removing her shoes and throwing a rug over her whilst she tidied the room—for Carol was the soul of order.

Patsy slept on, a heavy dreamless sleep, to awaken with the vaguest memory of a kiss and whispered good night. How odd it was, and how perplexing! What bed was this? And who lay in the one opposite? Patsy sat up, leaning on her elbow. There lay her striped pyjama suit, whilst the moonlight creeping in showed her the face of her sleeping companion.

"She's kind," thought Patsy. "I—I ought to be grateful, shure, but I'm not. I'd rather she had left me alone, for I'll never, never be her

friend. She's good. Mrs. Darlane said she was good, and I guess I don't even want to be good whilst I'm in England. W-when I'm home again I'll be a saint, I will indeed. Now I want to be a sinner!"

After that Patsy felt it would never do to say her prayers on this first night at an English school, yet she must just slip out to ask God to take care of Dad—and Mary and Terry—and Rags and Patches—and even Tim the sinner—yes, even Tim because sinners need to be prayed for, though she did not pray for herself.

And Patsy bundled back into bed in haste because—she was asleep before she finished the sentence.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WIZARD'S GLEN

Of course Patsy overslept, and so she had no chance to thank Carol who was just leaving the room as she awoke. In leaping out of bed Patsy brought all the bedclothes to the ground, causing Carol to pause.

"You must leave the room tidy," was her warning, and that decided Patsy as to her rôle for a first day at school. There was nothing tidy in Patsy's composition, and she took a delight this morning in leaving everything in its wrong place.

It was such a sunny spring day, and the view of woods and meadow and a distant glimpse of the sea ought to have helped Patsy back to sweet content. But no, she had said she would be a rebel, and a rebel she would be! Dad—at home —would be off to tour the garden alone! Heigho for home! Breakfast had begun when Patsy entered the dining-room, and Miss Bayle, the

head English mistress, told her briskly to go to her place and remember that prayers were at 7.30 sharp.

If she had not been so hungry Patsy would have refused breakfast, but it could not be done. Anyhow, she was glad to be amongst the juniors —seeing Carol with the elders at another table. Patsy's next-door neighbour was a thick-set freckled girl, with fine eyes and a wide mouth. She laughed at Patsy.

"Lucky kid," she whispered. "You must be favoured, but don't build on it. To-morrow Sarcastic Sarah will bite. Have some sausage —it's good stuff."

Patsy accepted sausage and began to take in her bearings, whilst Pauline Wilbrove enlightened her on various subjects.

"Myra, my sister, is on your other side," she explained. "We have been here two terms. Agatha Ellan makes the place possible. We are a happy lot—and you look like being a comrade. Funny that I can spot that, eh? You have a challenging eye. There's Agatha signalling. After brekker we'll be missing for ten minutes."

Patsy looked across and instantly noted

Agatha, whose tip-tilted nose, hazel eyes, and mischievous grin stamped her as one of the school thorns which are invented to give penance to school mistresses. Patsy ate a third slice of bread and butter and felt much better. She had found a niche which she was sure did not harbour Carol Harless. And a good thing too. Patsy was sensitive by nature and sensed atmosphere. If she and Carol were to be friends she would stand no chance of being bundled back to the wilds, and her worthy aunts, Mary Anna, and the new step-mother would all sing a song over their wisdom in sending her here for reformation.

"Miss Bayle will be nabbing you to go through your paces," said Pauline, as she whirled Patsy away to a certain class-room, untenanted as yet, "but we may as well have our little jawbation first. There you are, Agatha. What ho! A comrade."

Agatha, perched on a table in readiness, beamed.

"Seen in one act," she retorted. "From the Emerald Isle? I knew it. Come to my heart, Patsy O'Manlon. But stay—time presses. The Bayle will be looking for you to enquire much

as to your mental balance. One word—*are* you a sport? Do you love adventure or have you scruples about breaking rules? *We* have none. School would be a vast howling wilderness if taken seriously as per perfect prefects of that ilk. Quick! To be or not to be? We, known as the Tritons—for no reason at all—invite you to join the gay company. But don't come if you're squeamish. We are quite straight, and our fun is fun and not rotten stuff like smoking and swank. Catch on?"

Patsy "caught." The invitation suited her mood exactly. Here was freedom from the hideous groove labelled "English School." She would still be the Patsy of daring deeds. Instantly she saw herself as the ringleader of the Tritons. They struck palms on the bargain whilst the three comrades lingered to give an outline of their careers. Pauline and Myra were the daughters of a colonel in India. They had defied all discipline and fraternized with impossible comrades in their Yorkshire home.

After an escapade at a rural fair the pair had been packed off to school—much as had Patsy. With Agatha it was different. Her mother was dead, and her aunt, being a society woman,

wished Agatha to do her credit. At home Agatha had been impossible, so her cousin Juliet had complained. Hence—banishment! Agatha laughed over the tale of it. She had the faculty of enjoying life wherever she was placed. Patsy felt the fascination of her in her bones, but deep in the depths realized that Dad might have preferred Carol Harless. She asked for Carol's character from Agatha who laughed.

"She's straight," she allowed, "quite a sport—but a prefect of prefects. You'll have to dodge her. She would faint at the idea of even cracking a rule. But she won't spy—or sneak. I should welcome Carol as a Triton, but I'll never get her. She doesn't know the ways of the world. Her dad's a parson or something of the sort."

Patsy laughed too. She must not allow Carol to weave her spell over her as she might succeed in doing. Sure, Patsy was not going to be any sort of saint, and she was ready to start breaking rules right away. Miss Bayle aided that resolve considerably. Patsy was an ignoramus in much and a genius in little. She knew little about history, sums, or geography, and much about botany, dancing, and astronomy. What a mix-up!

"You will be in the Lower Fourth with juniors," said Miss Bayle. "If you want to take your proper place next term you must work hard."

Patsy smiled pensively. She had no intention of working hard. And in less than a week she was firmly imbedded in her niche with the Triton label. Carol had been busy with all the work of a first week of the summer term, and having found Patsy unfriendly took little heed of the younger girl till the evening when she found her slipping off by stealth to a night feast on the roof. Patsy in a white fury struggled against the detaining hand.

"Mind your own business," she urged.

Carol laughed tolerantly.

"Just what I am doing," she said; "don't behave like a kid of ten, Patsy. Sit here and listen. I know what the game is, and I've been meaning to warn you. Agatha and Pauline are the worst friends you can have. They are kind-hearted, jolly, but shallow, and disloyal to Mrs. Darlane. They will get into hot water when they are brought up before the prefects next time, and I don't want to see you with them. You've too much true sport in you. Play the game and make a success of school life."

"Very fine advice," retorted Patsy, "but I'm not caring for it. I'm loyal to my friends, anyway, and I don't see what business it is of yours to dictate to me."

"Live and learn," said Carol; "you may be a prefect yourself one day." And she laughed, quite a kindly laugh, at the sight of Patsy's face. "Don't be a duffer," she urged; "to-morrow if you like I'll take you over Maveling Tower."

It was the place of all others Patsy longed to explore. After all, the Tritons did not seem interested in ancient towers or mysterious caves such as her soul loved. Yet—she was not going to be disloyal to comrades.

"No, thank you," she replied, "if I go to Maveling I'll go with friends. Now, as you're interfering and spoiling a bit of fun I'll get back to bed."

"As you like," agreed Carol, "but you'll be sorry you refused my offer."

Patsy was sorry already, but she would not say so, and of course the Tritons sympathized tremendously the next day.

"We'll have a lark to-day instead," said Agatha. "Janet was telling me about the Wizard who lives just outside the village in a queer old post house

standing at the side of a deserted road. You give him a bob, and he looks in a magic mirror and reads the future. It's absolutely out of bounds, and you have to climb along a ledge of rock to reach the place. It will be top-hole to go."

Of course the suggestion was carried. Patsy sighed at parting with half her fortune in that shilling but no matter—the Wizard would tell her whether or not she was going to return home. She was fastening the strap of her shoe when Carol came in looking worried.

"Come and join a game of cricket, Patsy," she invited. "You're a promising bowler, and I think could take Hester's place in the junior eleven."

Patsy shook her head.

"Sorry," she replied, "I am going out with my friends."

Carol frowned. "I thought so," she said, "but you can't—juniors must have a prefect or mistress with them."

Patsy's cheeks flamed. "You're shure a book of rules," she replied, "but I happen to know them entirely."

Carol flushed with vexation too. She wanted

to win Patsy, but the more she invited the less she succeeded, and now sorely against her will she had to show her authority.

"Are you taking a senior?" she asked.

Patsy shrugged. "That's my business," she repeated.

"And mine," urged Carol. "Come, Patsy, I want to be friends. I want to help you. Won't you let me?"

It was not easy to say. Carol was the senior, and she was pleading to a junior whose hard, bright eyes told of defiance. Patsy's pulses raced. Ever since that first night when Carol had kissed her and put her to bed she had been ready to yield the ardent love of her restless little heart to this sympathizer, but if she did that she was breaking her vow to live as a rebel and get expelled. No! Carol should not know she had nearly won the day; she, Patsy, would defy her.

"When I want help I'll ask for it," she said curtly. "Now I am going."

"No," said Carol, "not till I have your promise. I am senior prefect."

"You can shure be the whole bundle," stormed Patsy, "but you won't stop me," and, pushing

the other aside, she reached the door, opened it, fled out—and locked that door behind her.

Carol was a prisoner in a room at the end of the passage where her calls and knocking might not be heard for hours, whilst she, Patsy, must hurry to meet her companions. The latter were waiting impatiently. Pauline caught Patsy's hand and roughly pulled her along.

"Nice time to keep us," she scolded.

Patsy told her story, drolly enough, at Carol's expense and yet felt mean. The Tritons were deafening in their praise.

"But the band will play," added Agatha. "Carol will have us up before the prefects. That makes me mad. Cheek, I call it for girls to dictate."

"Never mind prefects," laughed Myra; "before we get back the Wizard will have told us all the thrills possible. It's sport!"

Patsy tried hard to believe that, but was not quite sure. Still, those girls knew how to laugh. They were so full of fun, so daring in their adventures, that she resolutely shut her eyes to those little things which in her own honest heart she felt were not quite straight. Agatha always became flippant if Patsy urged telling the truth

on all occasions. It could not be done, said Agatha, and the others agreed—all excepting Patsy.

"Remember," Myra chirped in as they crossed the moor, "if asked, we have been gathering primroses in the Old Gap. Good enough?"

"No," Patsy replied. "Nothing like good enough! I shall say we have been to see the Wizard."

"Idiot," stormed Agatha. "You simply can't. It would mean not being allowed to go to Dayling Fair, and I like a fair."

"You can pick primroses on the way home and ease that tender little conscience," teased Pauline, whilst Myra yawned.

"Of all characters in history I hate most the boy who said he could not tell a lie," she averred.

Patsy lapsed into silence, but she was unhappy. Dad had often told her that the fault he most scorned was lying. She herself had always told the truth. Now—well, this was the only way to escape from the English school. As she followed Agatha she was thinking how Dad would admire Carol. And—Carol was the sport she had refused to chum with. Somehow now she fell behind the

other three half inclined to return to the playing field. Should she give in? Never! She was glad she had stayed when it came to crossing the ledge-like path along the edge of a precipice.

Now came adventure! She pictured the man of mystery in his lair with crystal and black cat complete. This was the ideal thrill she wanted, and with it the spice of daring—the venture of lifting the veil and learning what lay in the mystery of the future. Of course she knew all about the folly of such things. The dear old Vicar at home had sighed over the superstition and sin of believing in Gran Mahoney's witchcraft and fortune telling; her father had heartily agreed. Oh, yes, she knew how wrong it was to take fortune telling seriously, but this was only a bit of fun, and—a gasping cry from Myra warned her that adventure meant risk. Patsy's arm shot out; she just succeeded in grabbing the other girl as she slipped. There was a breathless moment of fighting for their balance and then both rested back against the sandstone wall behind them, weak and faint with the panic of it.

"I was nearly killed," whispered Myra; "you saved my life. Oh, Patsy, let's go back right

away! It's a horrible place. I—I have the creeps. I'm going back."

She began her retreat at once, and Patsy was ready enough to follow, but—the others would think she was deserting them. Patsy had a horror of anyone thinking her a coward. At home she had been so often praised for courage. She liked to feel herself labelled brave. Agatha would be sarcastic and mocking if she followed Myra, who looked anything but heroic as she hurried back to safety. No, she must go on. But the thrill of gay venturing had gone. Myra's terror had been infectious, and Patsy was still feeling nervy as she joined the two girls who stood behind a big bush on the threshold of the Wizard's lair. To her surprise they beckoned her in silence, drawing her down beside them.

"We can't go there," whispered Agatha, whilst a second later Pauline's terrified, "Look, look!" warned them all of the necessity to retreat.

A group of men stood at the entrance to the house; one sat on the ground. It was evident that the Wizard—a tattered scoundrel lolled there hugging a mongrel dog—had been drinking heavily; his friends were in the same state. Dreadful! Agatha led the way back to the ledge.

Retreat was the only thing. Not even dignified retreat, for Tag the dog, released from a throttling embrace, was on their track.

"Run!" cried Pauline. "Run!"

Patsy stood still. She had heard the shouts and heard a husky bark. Round from behind the bush came Tag, and Pauline was already staggering after Agatha. Patsy dropped on one knee. The mongrel dragged a length of rope from his collar, and there was a tree near. It was a moment of tension. If Tag followed along the ledge one, if not all, must fall into the hollow far below.

The girl heard a jeering shout but did not heed. As the mongrel leapt forward, red rage in its yellow eyes, she caught it by the throat. The dog was a terrier and fought fiercely. Patsy felt every muscle straining, but she held on. And the men standing by the bush watched, half sobered at the scene before them. For if Tag won it would go ill with the kid.

But Tag did not win. Exhausted, the dog fell back, and instantly Patsy had the rope round a branch, fastening it by a knot learned in Guiding days.

Tag, recovering, tried to reach her. The men,

roaring out a laugh, came stumbling forward, whilst Patsy's legs shook as she reached the ledge. Would the Wizard release the dog? If so, she would be killed, or if those men—suddenly her nerve failed her. Part of the path, narrow as it was, had crumbled as Pauline passed, and she felt all at once that she could not spring across the gap. It was just a trifling leap, and at any other time she would never have noticed it. Now——

She saw the Wizard stop and unknot Tag's rope. Would he let the rope go?

"Patsy!" screamed Agatha. "Do come. You stupid thing! The dog is dangerous."

Patsy looked in dazed fashion to where her comrades stood. They ought to have known she was faint in reaction from a brave act. She had saved them, and—someone was on the ledge. Not Agatha or Pauline, but a friend. It was Carol who stood beside her, her arm about her, whilst she looked past Patsy towards the group of men.

"If you loose that dog you will find yourselves in prison," cried Carol. "I warn you. Loose the dog and you will pay heavily."

The men scowled, and one shouted back abusively, but the Wizard had reasons enough

not to invite a visit from the police, and the four slouched off, Tag with them. Carol guided Patsy to where the others waited. She did not say one word, and somehow even thanks stuck in Patsy's throat. It was a silent walk home, and at the gate of the school Carol left them.

"I have my music class now," she explained. "If I were you, Patsy, I should go to Nannie and get some sal volatile. I am—sorry about this."

Agatha shrugged her shoulders as the elder girl hurried off.

"Ten to one she'll report us," she grumbled, "and we shan't go to the fair. But you're prime favourite, Pats, I can see that, in spite of Carol's high-handedness. She was pretty useful too. If you can get her to keep mum we'll subscribe for a box of chocs for her in memory of an adventure. What a day! Where's Myra? The little cat! And we aren't going to have our fortunes told by the Wizard—not for this child! Go along, Pats, soft soap the perfect prefect and bring us news to the lair where we shall rest and plan some sweet surprises and joy-time to take the taste of the Wizard's Cave out of our mouths. So long!"

Waving an airy farewell to Patsy, Agatha drew her arm through Pauline's and turned away.

Patsy sighed. She wanted to find Carol later and thank her, and, if Carol played the game, she believed she would be loyal to her ever after. But would Carol promise not to report the adventure in the Wizard's Glen? She was half afraid she would not do anything of the kind.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRITONS DEFIANT

"I—I HAVE been waiting for you," said Patsy.

Carol smiled. Patsy had no idea how patronizingly she was speaking to the elder girl.

"I'm glad," she replied, "for I wanted to speak to you too. Patsy, be wise. Does not this afternoon's trouble warn you that you are in the wrong set? You'll never make good at school if you go with Agatha and Co."

Patsy frowned. Carol's hand was on her shoulder, her voice was kind. But she was not going to stand there and listen to a lecture. It would be better to explain things at once.

"I don't want to make good at school," she said, in hard, flippant tones. "I don't care two straws whether I stay. Yes, I *do* care—I don't want to stay! I have been trying my hardest to get home again. But this wouldn't mean expulsion anyhow. It means losing a treat. We did no harm at all, and Pauline is old enough to

be a prefect even if she has not been lucky enough to get the honour."

Something challenging in her tones provoked Carol's quick retort.

"It is not a question of luck or of age," she said, her colour rising, "as you know quite well. A prefect is chosen for her loyalty to those in authority and her influence with others. You girls deliberately broke a rule and nearly came in for an unpleasant experience. If harm had come, Mrs. Darlane would have had the blame. That is where you are so unfair."

"Probably," said Patsy, with a shrug of her shoulders. "Which means that you are going to tell Mrs. Darlane and have our holiday stopped."

Carol turned towards the window. There was no mistaking Patsy's attitude.

"Yes," she replied quietly. "I am going to tell Mrs. Darlane."

"Thank you," retorted Patsy, white with anger. "At least I know now what to expect. It is shure why I was put in this room with you. You are the jailer of a girl from the wilds who has to—to be licked into shape. I have got to be turned into a pattern saint—or else be reported to the head mistress. Thank you."

"As you will," said Carol, "if you choose to twist facts you must. Mrs. Darlane asked me to help you to understand school life. Your father is an old friend, and she loves you in a special way for his sake. I am going to her because if I did not I should fail in a trust. You are getting into the wrong set. I like Agatha Ellan, and there is no real harm in her chums, but they break rules and are bad friends for you. Patsy, won't you listen and believe in my wish to help you? Won't you trust me—as a friend?"

Patsy stood with her back to the wall. If she had let herself go she would have been ready to love this Carol with all the devotion of junior to senior, but—that meant giving up that foolish rebellion; it meant settling down in the English school and returning home the demure, well-mannered girl a step-mother would be ready to tolerate. And she would never be that girl! Always she would be the Patsy of childhood's days—her Dad's chum who was free of all restraint. And so she had to steel herself against that persuasive voice.

"No," she said curtly. "You know why! I'm not free to be a prefect's friend—I have chosen my friends and my set."

"Very well," retorted Carol, "then there is no more to be said. I am sorry."

She did not attempt to plead, knowing it would only strengthen the rebellious mood of this foolish child; but, when the door closed behind her, Patsy felt the stinging tears rise to her eyes. She hated to cry—simply hated it—but she could not help it, so great was her longing to call Carol back—Carol, the girl who played a straight game.

And yet, when Patsy joined the Tritons in the sports-room—where they had no right to be—she was brimming over with the story of a grievance against this very Carol. Agatha and Co. were ensconced in a dilapidated hammock which they had temporarily fastened to hooks across the room.

"Have an orange," Agatha urged, "and some chocs. Tom excelled himself in smuggling contraband in for us this evening."

Patsy accepted the orange without feeling the least wish to eat it.

"Who is Tom?" she asked.

Myra was ready with information.

"The garden boy. Jeanie, his sister, is scullery maid. Tom's priceless. He has a genius for smuggling, scouting, any odd job. He is the

Tritons' right-hand man. Fancy our not having introduced him. Honour, he is the most useful lad—and cheap. A threepenny tip is riches."

Patsy did not reply. Here was another problem. It did not seem at all the game to be employing a garden boy to aid and abet such schemes. Again Patsy regretted Carol—and sport.

She had to smother the regret by a vivid picture of Carol's uncompromising decision to tell of to-day's escapade. Of course Agatha and Co. were furious. Patsy was carried away by their storming into a vague belief that they were all martyrs being persecuted by a prig. She forgot her own regrets and chimed in with Pauline's tirade. If they were stopped going to the fair they would just smash rules right and left in utter defiance. It was a regular song about Tritons never, never, never being slaves, as they rocked boisterously to and fro in the hammock till the insecure cords gave way and landed them all too hastily on to the floor. After that those Tritons felt it might be better to retire to the class-room, hence to bed.

"I don't care so awfully if we don't go to the fair," said Agatha airily, "for we shall find a much more thrilling stunt; in fact, I believe I find one

developing out of embryo, so all is well, and Carol can do her worst."

Patsy laughed. "Who cares for prefects?" she mocked, and yet felt conscious all too late of regret as she curled up in bed, resolved to sham sleep before Carol's coming. It is really quite extraordinarily difficult to be at daggers drawn with someone whom you feel in your bones that you could easily love very loyally.

"But Carol will never want to be friends after to-day," thought Patsy dreamily. "And—a very good thing too!"

Yet her lashes were wet as she fell asleep.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CRICKET MATCH

AGATHA and Co. did not go to the fair, but of course they pretended they did not mind that one bit. Patsy echoed the declaration, but she could not make herself convincing since only that morning Mrs. Darlane had had a talk with her—a long and kindly talk in which she had vainly invited Patsy's confidence. She had not been one bit like a schoolmistress but very like a mother, and again Patsy felt the longing to throw herself into those friendly arms and confess her folly. But no—that would be disloyal to Agatha and her set; they would think she had betrayed them. And so Patsy answered in monosyllables, keeping her eyes downcast, and was, oh, so glad to escape with just the briefest thanks to her father's friend for asking her to come to her at any time she would find a talk helpful!

In the garden outside she found Carol alone. It really seemed as if the elder girl had been

waiting for her, and her smile showed that she had quite forgotten all about Patsy's grumpiness last night.

"Come along to the cricket field," she invited; "the juniors have challenged our second eleven —very plucky if not cheeky—and they want you to take Mary Dunn's place. We all know you can bowl."

Patsy thrilled. She loved cricket and had played with and against the village boys at home to the vexation of Mary Anna. For once she forgot the plans of the Tritons, who had suggested a prowl over the moors, and followed Carol. It was nice to be hailed by the younger girls as a possible champion. Ella Wilson, captain of the juniors, pounced on her at once, entreating her to take her share of the bowling. For the first time since her coming to school Patsy felt the joy of leadership.

The juniors batted first and made but a moderate score. Then came Patsy's chance with the ball. Facing her was one of the elder girls who had looked disdainfully on this madcap Patsy from old Ireland. It suddenly seemed to be so much more than a mere game of cricket! Patsy was bowling for the honour of the Emerald

Isle; she was going to prove herself, whilst girls, crowds of girls, looked on, mocking the audacious juniors.

Crash! Right and left flew the bails, and Ellison Green marched off, indignant and outraged by the thought that a mere junior had bowled her whilst only one run stood to her name. Patsy was the juniors' heroine right away. How they applauded, danced, jeered, and urged Patsy on to fresh feats! Patsy, flushed and joyous, took her place, half smiling at Carol, who smiled back.

Crash! A second wicket, and the seniors groaned with the distress of it. Those juniors must never be allowed to win the day. They would become unbearable. It was up to such girls as Thora Dell or Gertie Greeson to teach them their place. What a battle it was! Ella Wilson had taken Patsy's place, but she was not very successful, and the score began to mount.

Patsy had forgotten her late comrades as though they had never existed. Tritons were nothing to her; that little hard ball with its red leather jacket was everything. The seniors had climbed down from their lofty disdain and were playing serious cricket.

After all, the seniors managed to run up a formidable score. As a bat Patsy did not shine, but now, in the second innings, she was fighting for all she was worth. Again and again she repeated her bowling success of the first innings, and the great moment came when Patsy, racing forward, took a marvellous catch that brought the match to an end with the seniors beaten by ten runs.

The juniors went mad then—or very near it. Carol saved them from choking, in the effort to find breath, by inviting the heroic eleven over to Farmer Sewell's strawberry field where they might pick and feast for a whole half-hour without paying. That offer of Carol's was a real stroke of diplomacy, for when juniors do vanquish seniors there is bound to be a trifling soreness of spirit which strawberries, even minus cream, may do much to heal.

Convinced the seniors knew every move in playing the game, the victorious eleven followed Carol across the lane and through the gate. What a sight for thirsty folk! There, under their leaves, resting on the yellow straw, were strawberries, ripe, red, luscious.

Farmer Sewell, a stalwart yeoman of seventy-odd, chuckled at the sight of those eager faces.

Away went the girls, laughing, stooping, eating, with extraordinary zeal. Patsy was not behind the rest—she was enjoying herself as she had never expected to enjoy herself at this English school.

Presently, with Carol as companion, she crossed the tiny bridge over a stream towards the farm garden. Carol wanted to buy some flowers for which Mrs. Sewell was famous, but, as they reached the wicket, the elder girl was called back to a group of her school friends.

Patsy remained at the wicket gate, scarcely believing her eyes at the sight of Agatha, Pauline, Myra, and two strangers—a young man and a girl of about twenty—seated under an acacia on the lawn with a well-spread tea-table close beside them. Agatha was on her feet already, having heard Carol's voice, and the next moment Patsy saw her three comrades dive into the laurels and disappear, leaving their friends shaking with laughter.

Patsy felt her colour burning in her cheeks. So this was the "thrilling fun" the Tritons had promised her if she joined them after dinner. Somehow, Patsy was glad—very glad—she had not done so, but the keen zest with which she had

enjoyed her half holiday was gone. She saw the Tritons' friends looking towards her and whispering; the girl shrugged her shoulders; then Carol rejoined Patsy, and the pair went off in search of the farmer's wife.

It was not till they had returned to the school that Carol laid her hand on her companion's shoulder.

"I'm so glad you have joined up with the cricketers," she said, "and Mrs. Darlane will be glad too. Forget that you came here as a rebel, Patsy, and just find all your father meant you to find here—real sport and true friends."

Patsy hesitated. She wanted to surrender, she was feeling out of sympathy with her first chums, and yet—she had joined hands with Agatha and Co., and she felt it would be mean if she deserted them. Of all virtues Patsy counted loyalty one of the chief. She boasted that she never deserted a friend and had often been praised by Dad for glueing herself to a losing cause. So now, though she yearned for Carol's friendship, and felt it was there waiting for her in spite of the difference in their ages, she refused the olive branch.

"It was a jolly game," she said slowly, "and thank you so much for inviting me over to the

farm, but—I don't think my set will ever link up with your set, and I don't desert my friends."

Her chin went up as she spoke those last words. Patsy was sure she was doing the loyal, right thing, though some queer little pang at her heart warned her to yield. Carol's keen eyes searched the other's face; then, with a sigh, she loosened her hold on Patsy's shoulder.

"I am sorry," was all she said—no persuasion, no personal request, just "I am sorry"—and with that she walked away.

Patsy watched her go and longed to call her back. She could have adored this splendid Carol who was such a sport, but—she must be loyal to gay little Agatha and those adventure-loving Tritons who would help to land her back safe and sound at Castle Kerraford where she would take up life again as she had left it. A wave of home-sickness swept over Patsy; she felt just as if she must rush off, catch train and steamer, never waiting, never halting, till she was in her father's arms.

It was odd that after so happy an afternoon she should feel this sudden revulsion, and, in a discontented mood, Patsy climbed the stairs to her room.

"Shure! I'm like any old tabby with its fur rubbed wrong!" she murmured, half laughing at herself. "I only hope the Tritons will have some real experiences to make me laugh."

On the landing she met Ellen, the housemaid, with a letter in her hand. It was for Patsy, and the postman had forgotten to deliver it with the two o'clock mail. Patsy fled to her room, rejoicing.

It was from Dad himself—written from New York; that brought a thrill, and with quivering lips and fast beating heart Patsy tore open the envelope. Dad was a bad hand at correspondence, but this was a longer letter than usual, and there was another enclosed, in a feminine handwriting.

Patsy seated herself on the bed and began to read. The little clock on the mantelshelf—a gift of Mary Anna's—ticked noisily; somewhere in the fields outside a girl was singing a gay little song. Patsy had grown very white, and her hand trembled as she turned the letter over and began to re-read. Surely, surely she must have made a mistake! It did not mean that Dad was going away to Sumatra with his bride, returning to Ireland in time for Christmas?

"You must sure not be too disappointed, my little Patsy," wrote Dad, "for it is just the biggest disappointment to us, but Sadie—your new mother-to-be—has been sent for to see a sister who is living far away in Sumatra and is very, very ill; it is likely to be a long illness, and she is just sighing her heart away for her sister. So we are being married in New York, on June 17th, and sailing a few days later. The address will be c/o Vrow Van Kemp, Palembang, Sumatra. We hope to be back in time to welcome you home to Castle Kerraford in December, and I know how hard my dear old friend Ettie Darlane will be trying to make the summer holidays a happy time. I shall have some yarns to spin you, Patsy mavourneen, and the tale of adventure too; it's a long trail there, but a quick one back to old Ireland where my chum Patsy will be waiting to give us both the merriest greeting."

It was true. Twist or turn as she might, Patsy could not alter the hideous fact that this new mother—this interloper who was already spoiling Patsy's life—would be taking her own darling Dad all the way across the Pacific because a sister was ill. In her first stormy rebellion Patsy was just certain that this Vrow Van Kemp was not

ill at all. It was a plot—a *plot* to rob her of her darling Dad. Yes, and she had robbed her already for was not this the 20th day of June? So—Dad and his wife were on the high seas sailing, as it seemed, away out of her life altogether.

If only she could have cried Patsy would have felt better. But she could not cry. She was hard, hard as nails, bitter in her mood. Dad had failed her, and the old days would never return. What would life be now? She stood up, very stiff, with the rebellious, wayward mood stealing over her once more. She just did not care for anyone. She would please herself. And it did not please her to stay here at school during the summer holidays. So, if Mrs. Darlane could not keep a rebel, she would have to return home where Mary and Terry would receive her with open arms.

"I'm glad I didn't chum with Carol," she whispered to herself. "I'll go and find my own chums, and we'll have some jolly fine adventure. I don't mind what it is."

She went to the open window and leaned out. Underneath she could see the narrow walk lined with privet hedge and laburnum trees which

led to the back premises. A little group stood under a late-flowering may tree. She recognized Pauline's green frock. Yes, it was Pauline talking to Jeanie, the scullery maid, and the garden boy, Tom. Patsy would have scorned to play eavesdropper, nor did she remain to spy, but as she looked down she had distinctly seen Pauline put money into Tom's hand.

Of course that was absolutely against rules—and it was not playing the game. Whatever it was she wanted, Pauline had no right to bribe the garden boy. Patsy felt herself included in something sneaking, as she leaned against the wall. And yet Pauline was her friend. Well, the best way, the only thing, was to find those Tritons, ask Pauline what that transaction meant, and then if possible renew the compact to which as yet she had been loyal, the compact of the merry Tritons.

It was not difficult to find her chums since a meeting had been appointed in a long attic—a place of many boxes, broken chairs, cobwebs—and mice. Agatha, perched in a derelict clothes basket, was chattering away merrily when Patsy came in. The Tritons looked long and pensively at the new-comer. Then Agatha spoke.

"We were not at all sure whether you meant

to honour us, Pats," said she. "You know the danger of having a foot in each camp, and you never mentioned playing cricket when we suggested a ramble for the afternoon. Also, you didn't look too friendly when you and the perfect prefect came along. If the P.P. had caught us red-handed whose side would you have been on, eh?"

Patsy coloured to the roots of her hair.

"In plain English," she retorted, "you think I am a sneak."

There was a battle of glances between her and Agatha; the latter had a personality for all her frivolity, otherwise she could never have been leader of the Tritons, and those bright blue eyes of hers searched in vain for guilt in Patsy's angry ones. The anger pleased Agatha, who laughed her gayest.

"I thought it just possible," she admitted frankly, "but you are acquitted now. I can generally tell, you know, and I hope you are boiling with indignation at having been suspected of being a worm. Come along and join our conclave."

Patsy hesitated. She had expected argument and proving, but that wasn't Agatha's way. She

had made a mistake and was quite ready to own it. Patsy, seeing friendly smiles, responded as quickly. Here were chums indeed. She forgot all that she had against those Tritons, forgot the questions she had meant to ask about Tom and Jeanie, and sat down prepared to join in any daring scheme. Why should she bother to please Dad or Dad's old friend since she was of so little importance in Dad's life?

So Patsy was quite ready to allow Myra to twine her arm around her and to accept the offer of a sticky lump of Turkish delight from Pauline whilst Agatha disclosed her scheme.

"Next Wednesday," she said, "is a half holiday. Dinner at one o'clock—we can get off by two. Patrick and Cis—my cousins—will meet us in the car in the Hollow. We shall go to Orlington and have a gorgeous meal. After that we shall go as far as Wenton Cove by car and have a picnic tea—returning about six p.m. —when possibly a very small fib will save us—nay, prithee, comrades, we shall tell the truth in saying we fell in with a relative of mine and picnicked. At most that means next Saturday in the schoolroom, and it will be worth it. Twiggee?"

Pauline and Myra expressed their delight. Patsy executed an Irish jig. This would be fun and freedom worth—oh, well worth the loss of a holiday! The conclave concluded with a vote of thanks to Agatha for having such obliging relatives. Really, lessons seemed quite out of place after such a thrill, and Miss Barlow had to warn Patsy that she would have to spend Wednesday afternoon writing out her history lesson if she did not pay more attention. Patsy smothered a titter and kicked Agatha under the table. She could see Miss Barlow was vexed and half expected a severe reprimand, but for some reason or other Miss Barlow was in a lenient mood and passed the rebel by with a sad little shake of the head which smote Patsy with shame and yet brought a smile to her lips.

Oh, how horrid it is to be made up of a bundle of contradictions! That was Patsy's trouble, for, though she laughed and said what fun it was to be on the high road to rebel adventure, she had a hungry longing deep down to surrender to Carol's kindly influence and play the game. Well, if Dad had played the game to her she would have been quite willing to do the same, but not now. And Patsy's heart swelled in pain as she

thought of the many months to pass before she returned home—and even when she did it would not be home as it used to be.

"I don't care! I'm going to enjoy life as a Triton," thought Patsy, and dodged Carol as she saw the latter crossing the schoolroom to speak to her. She and Carol could never be friends now.

## CHAPTER VI

### PATSY THE HEROINE

"SLIP into the recreation-room as you come out from the dining-room," said Agatha softly in Patsy's ear. "All is in order. We shall have a golden time. Don't take two pieces of treacle tart —we are having our real dinner later. I wish we could escape school stew, but it can't be done. Never mind, we shall grow a second appetite before we reach Orlington. I do hope those clouds don't mean rain. Cis is fussy about getting wet. Hope for the best. Cheerio!"

Patsy thrilled. She was going to enjoy herself thoroughly. Since she had told Carol so point-blank that she did not mean to desert her friends the elder girl had not invited her to join any sports. Patsy had half hoped she would have been asked to captain the junior eleven, but no invitation had come, and she held Carol responsible. Well, who cared? Not she at any rate. She could have plenty of fun elsewhere. But there was some-

thing a trifle too hectic in her mirth as she met her fellow plotters under the school wall.

"Lucky Miss Barlow didn't nab you," was Pauline's greeting. "She was collecting enthusiasts for a nature ramble. Give me a leg up so that I can get astride that chestnut tree branch. Is your cousin there, Ag?"

"I will not be called 'Ag,'" retorted Agatha; "it's too hideous. Yes, I can see Patrick whizzing along down the hill. How I adore scorching! Here comes the rain. Beastly!"

"We aren't sugar or salt," said Myra; "a little rain won't hurt. I do hope we go picnicking. We can bathe however hard it rains. It's wet in the sea."

But the two in the car did not look so pleased with life. A cold drizzle had set in, and hardly had the girls squeezed into the car than Cis Elsdon put a final damper on hopes already drooping.

"Of course a picnic is hopeless," she said.

Agatha groaned. "We don't mind the rain," she protested, "a spot or two like this won't hurt us."

"It may not hurt you," retorted her cousin tartly, "but I am certainly not going to spoil a

new hat and risk having a cold for the Linleys' ball for the sake of eating sandwiches on a damp rock."

"Don't you worry, kids," put in Patrick; "we're going to give you a jolly good feed at the 'Crown', and then if it is still murky we'll do a matinée. There's quite a good show on."

The girls beamed on him. Pauline openly avowed she preferred the theatre to a picnic any old day. Patsy thrilled. She had only once in her life been to a theatre and felt tremendously elated.

Luncheon at the old-fashioned inn was a new experience too. The girls laughed all the way through from the moment they unpacked themselves from the car. Cis was not in her happiest mood. Myra had caught and torn her chiffon sleeve, and the joyous chatter of the girls jarred, especially on the top of a squabble with her brother. But if Cis were dull Pat made up for it in hilarity of mood. He teased, he joked, till he sent Pauline and Myra into hysterics. Agatha was frivolous and egged Pauline on to do daring little follies which brought the attention of others lunching in the great dining-room upon the party.

"Just a bunch of silly schoolgirls out with their elder brother," Patsy heard one man remark, whilst an old lady passed her criticism on modern manners.

Patsy shrank within herself. Though as full of fun as any of them, she hated to make herself conspicuous in a public place, and when Pauline shrieked with laughter and then choked, she felt herself blushing to the roots of her hair. Miss Elsdon protested too.

"You must behave, girls," she urged; "there are two ladies glaring at us from the table in the corner. Agatha, you must not turn round and stare. Behave."

"Support me, girls," giggled Agatha, "or I shall collapse. Don't you see who it is, Paul, my honey? Mrs. Lestrelle—Mrs. Darlane's crony. What ill wind blew the dear old dame in here? Well is it, oh, comrades, to be hanged for ye sheep as well as the lamb! Patrick, don't shrug your manly shoulders, but beckon the waiter. I am longing for more of that apricot jam. Good, he sees and is returning."

"I can't think how you can stow it all away," said her cousin good-naturedly as he beckoned the grinning waiter. "I suppose you all want coffee,

but I warn you the show will be starting. We didn't get here till past two o'clock."

"Don't wait for the coffee," urged Patsy, who was longing to escape from the critical gaze of so many around. "*Do* come. You know you'll hate losing any thrills."

Luckily, the others agreed, and the party trooped out, Patsy wondering why her companions failed to be embarrassed by the staring eyes which watched them as far as the door. It was the same in the street. Pauline and Myra linked arms and more than once tried playfully to push each other over the kerb. Even Agatha called them to order, and after that there was no more playing about.

The rain still fell in a drizzle. The picnic could never have taken place; it was dark and dreary, and in consequence the theatre was packed. Patrick Elsdon got them excellent seats in the third row of the stalls, and then to their surprise he and Cis bade them good-bye.

"Sorry, old thing," he said to Agatha, "but as it has turned so wet, Cis and I thought we would motor to Exeter and probably pop off to London by train. Jolly having you, and I hope you will enjoy the play. So long."

"But wait," urged Agatha. "What are we to do? We can't walk home. I call it real mean leaving us in the lurch."

"No need to grouse, my lamb," said Cis severely; "if you had waited you would have heard the conclusion. Pat has ordered a car from Richam's garage to be outside at five-thirty. The man will take you back to school, and the bill is paid. Ta-ta."

A chorus of thanks and regrets followed the pair who went off laughing—and secretly glad to be rid of their charges. Agatha was very philosophic over it all.

"Base desertion, of course," she said, "but true to type. Pat and Cis are darlings, but selfish to the core. I suppose they were bored and planned getting off in a hurry. Never mind, we can enjoy ourselves just as much without them. Have a choc, Patsy, and don't look like an unfledged prefect. Carol is having a depressing influence on you."

Patsy frowned, refusing the proffered chocolate.

"Carol and I are not on speaking terms exactly," she said, "and I'm ready for any sport. But shrieking at a hotel table doesn't strike me as funny."

"She's got the wind up, seeing Mrs. Lestrelle," scoffed Pauline. "Never mind, Pats, you can fade away when it comes to the school for scandal. Now, don't argue or snarl. I mean to enjoy the play. Isn't the tall man in uniform a pet?"

Patsy sat back and looked towards the stage. She was not happy. Pauline and Myra were noisy, and she hated noise. She was sure Agatha disliked their rough ways at times—but Agatha was loyal just as she was. And how hot it was in here! Then the play began to absorb her, and she forgot to trouble her head over problems.

It was a well-acted, well-staged little drama with a thrilling third act showing Italian brigands in a mountain fastness, a girl prisoner, and a soldier lover. Myra shrieked when a pistol was fired, and the actors were holding their audience well when Patsy noted a thin, snake-like flame running up the left wing of the stage. An electric wire had fused, and a few seconds later a sudden blaze was followed by a cry of "Fire!"

The manager of the theatre who was sitting in the stage box sprang on to the stage, giving an order for the safety curtain to be lowered, but a trifling flaw prevented the curtain from dropping, and a rush of smoke, the bursting out of more

flames, and the terrified scream of women brought the dreaded panic.

Agatha was splendid, cool, alert, ready to help in any way. Without any rushing or pushing she led the way out of the stalls, but Pauline had a difficulty in getting Myra along. Myra was a most uncertain quantity; she could be heroic, or she could—and did—very often go to pieces in a crisis. She went to pieces now, and Agatha had to return to help Pauline to bring her along. The entrance was blocked. Men and women began struggling and pushing in their desire to escape. The stage was ablaze. Shouts, cries, loud orders, and the responding shout that the engines were arriving made pandemonium.

Patsy had been cut off from her chums, for, seeing a little old lady in the second row of the stalls collapse, she had climbed over the seats to reach her. Such a very small old lady she was too—and all alone. Patsy put her arm round her and drew her down on to one of the velvet seats.

"You will be better soon," she said cheerily, "and I will help you out. You would be crushed if you tried to reach the entrance. I believe if we could climb on to the stage we should get out

better through the stage entrance. Those flames are beaten back now."

"What a little heroine you are, child!" panted the old lady. "One of the men kicked my leg by accident as he rushed past; that is why I nearly fainted. I am lame too, so you had better go and save yourself."

Patsy laughed. "Look," she said, "there is the manager on the stage and the firemen. I don't believe there will be any danger if we wait here. What cowards! Some of those people are fighting and not caring what happens to anyone but themselves."

"You are a wonderful girl," said the old lady feebly. "I should have been trampled to death if you had not picked me up. My name is Partlone, and I live at Artog House outside the town. I am telling you this in case I—I am foolish enough to lose consciousness."

Even as she spoke her head sagged and she fell against Patsy. By this time the theatre was empty excepting for the crowd of firemen and officials on the stage. Presently a man, seeing Patsy and the old lady in the stalls, came to them. Patsy looked at him anxiously.

"She has fainted," she said; "her leg is hurt.

Could you get her some brandy and help to carry her out—by a quiet way? I know her address."

The man lifted the little old lady in his arms.

"Is it your grannie, child?" he asked. "If so, she ought to be proud of you. I never saw such a plucky kid. The fire is under control now, and the danger is over, but there are some twenty casualties—some very serious ones—owing to the panic. You have set an example to men who ought to be ashamed of themselves."

Patsy did not reply. The smoke hung heavy over the stage and part of the theatre, making her cough and shed tears, but she was glad, so glad she had been able to help that dear, little old lady, who recovered consciousness as soon as she was placed in the taxicab someone summoned.

"Artog House," said Patsy, climbing into the car, too. "To Mrs. Partlone's."

She felt herself blushing shyly when some of the crowd which had gathered raised a cheer in her honour. There was no sign of her chums, but she felt sure they had been among the first to escape from the theatre. Mrs. Partlone was unable to talk, but she held Patsy's hand, smiling at her in a feeble, grateful way. Once she asked her name and where she lived.

"I know Mrs. Darlane well," she said, "a sweet woman."

Patsy felt a thrill of shame. It would hurt Mrs. Darlane that her friend should have seen some of her girls alone in a theatre, and she longed to explain. But Mrs. Partlone was not well enough to be able to attend to any story about truant children, and Patsy was glad when that taxi stopped at the front door of a big, grey house. A manservant answered the bell and showed dismay at sight of his mistress whom he helped indoors.

Patsy stood, flushed and uncomfortable, on the steps. She had no money to pay the man, and none to hire him to take her back to the school—some six miles away.

The butler returned in a few seconds, however, and, not noticing Patsy, gave the driver an order to fetch the doctor. Whilst he was directing him as to the way, Patsy, relieved of one difficulty, made her escape. She feared as she hurried off that someone called "Missie," but she was eager to avoid thanks or help. She could walk home of course.

But what a long six miles it was to be sure, and Patsy was tired after the excitement and anxiety

of the last hour. Yet she set her lips together and squared her shoulders. She liked tough jobs when she was in a mood of this kind.

The first three miles did not seem long. Patsy, with hands in pockets, tramped along, head thrown back, manner aggressive. She had the feeling still of being up against things and not caring. Yet to counteract the defiance was a growing realization of danger just averted; gratitude to God for saving her and helping her to save the dear, little old lady was due.

Patsy stood still. Twilight was glamouring the whole scene with its wonderful beauty. Woods, hills, sea, and stream were glorified in the golden sunset haze. And God was in the midst.

Patsy folded her hands, all the defiance gone. She felt she must kneel here on the heather in this lonely place and say thank you to God. It was a very humble, very earnest "thank you," and tears rolled down Patsy's cheeks as she said it. As she rose she knew she could not be a rebel again.

Patsy felt ashamed. She had boasted of loyalty, prided herself on loyalty, had been loyal to those madcap friends whom she might have influenced if she had been true to Mrs. Darlane,

and—she had forgotten her loyalty to higher things.

"But I will try. I will be true," whispered Patsy. "I'll tell Agatha and the others. I believe they will listen."

Then, feeling happier than she had done for weeks, Patsy trudged on, trying to ignore tired limbs and weary heart, yet truly thankful when the red tiles of the school at last loomed in sight. It was late, and dusk was creeping on, but she was home, and there in the gateway stood Carol herself.

## CHAPTER VII

### PATSY FINDS A FRIEND

CAROL did not ask questions, but she seemed worried and vexed.

"Mrs. Darlane was sending to the police station," she said, "if you had not come. She heard what had kept you at the theatre, for she rang up. But they could not tell her who the old lady was, and the other girls did not know anything. Pauline and Agatha had had enough to do looking after Myra. Poor Mrs. Darlane is quite ill with anxiety."

But though there was reproach in Carol's voice Patsy did not take offence. She knew perfectly well she had done wrong and would be ready to own it. But just now she was too tired to care about anything. Mrs. Darlane saw that it was so at a glance. "Take Patsy up to Nannie," she told Carol, "and ask her to give her some hot milk and see she gets to bed at once. She had better sleep in the sickroom. There is to be no talking."

How glad Patsy was! She did not want to talk at all; in fact, she was almost too tired to drink the hot milk Nannie insisted on her taking, and she was asleep almost before her head touched the pillow.

The trouble was that her dreams were most alarming. She thought all sorts of terrors were surrounding her. She was rescuing the oddest folk from roaring flames, and Tim Maloney was trying to place a pitiful kitten on the top of some gaudy scenery. It was a relief when she woke up to find daylight had come, and there was Nannie by her bed with a breakfast tray, and orders that she was to stay where she was till dinner-time. Patsy tried to protest.

"I'm not ill," she explained, "only a wee bit lazy. I believe I'd better get up."

"I believe you'll do nothing of the kind," retorted Nannie. "Eat your breakfast and go to sleep again. You'll be all the readier for your lessons this afternoon."

So Patsy went to sleep and never woke till long after dinner-time.

"Talk of laziness!" said Nannie, with a twinkle in her eyes. "But as you have slept through the French lesson, the geography class, and all the

rest, you may as well dress and go down to tea with Mrs. Darlane, as she is expecting you."

Patsy was quite ready now to dress. She had recovered from all that dull stupidity, and was her own self again. Would Mrs. Darlane be very angry with her? She hoped not.

It was not tea-time yet, but Mrs. Darlane was waiting and greeted her kindly. There was just one pause as the two sat together on the lounge; then Patsy blurted out her confession.

"I've not played the game a bit," she said. "I wanted to be sent away, and I didn't care if I worried you or made Dad sad. I've shure been mean; and you know all about yesterday? Agatha will have told you, and I was as much to blame as they were."

Mrs. Darlane sighed. "Yes, dear," she agreed. "You have acted wrongly and foolishly, so have your comrades. I am sorry, because I do believe you have all acted more from want of thought than as rebels. I have talked to the three others, and they have promised to be loyal in future. If they are not loyal they will have themselves to blame if they lose all the privileges I give girls I can trust. I want your loyalty, too, Patsy, and I want more from you, too, child—your love."

Patsy was unprepared for those last words, unprepared to feel Mrs. Darlane's arm round her, her kiss on her cheek. Taken by surprise, by storm, there was nothing for it but surrender. The loneliness vanished just as rebellion had done last night, and impulsively Patsy turned to hug this true friend.

"I will be loyal—shure," she said. "Will you trust me? I wanted to be sent away—expelled! I didn't care because Dad didn't care. I've been—horrid. I'm sorry. Will you trust me? And I can't give up my friends, can I?"

Mrs. Darlane hesitated. "I would never ask you to give up a real friend, Patsy," she said, "but I want you to prove them. I have forgiven Agatha, Pauline, and Myra. I am trusting them. If they are loyal I would not ask you to cease your comradeship. Only, be true to yourself. Now, there are two things I want to tell you. One is about Carol. She has gone home for a week—her mother has sent for her; her sister is being married on Wednesday, and Carol is to be bridesmaid. It is all very unexpected owing to the bridegroom having been ordered to join his regiment. On her return I do want you and Carol to be friends. There are two years differ-

ence in your age and much that is different in your outlook, but you could be very real friends if you choose. Carol wishes it, I wish it, and——"

"I wish it," whispered Patsy, "only—only I've been so stupid. Will Carol understand?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Darlane, smiling, "and she wanted to tell you so before she left, but you were not awake. However, a week soon passes, and then you can have your talk. Remember too, Patsy, I want you to come to me—as you would have done to your own mother."

Patsy was won. It was no use denying it. No use to talk about the hateful English school any longer. She was going to play the game, and she was telling Mrs. Darlane so when the door opened to admit a visitor. How surprised Patsy was! She had had no idea Mrs. Darlane was having a tea-party, and after all it was not a real tea-party, for the visitor was only the dear, little old lady whom Patsy had helped in the theatre.

She was a very smiling old lady to-day, and gave Patsy the biggest kiss.

"I've not come to thank you, my dear," she said, "because I could not possibly do that. I owe you my life, and, though I am sixty-five years old, I value my life still because God has work for

me to do. And it is work I love. But I have come because I want to know you better, and your kind mistress said the very best way to do that was to come over to tea to-day."

And what a cosy tea-party it was! Patsy had been so dreadfully afraid she was going to be thanked—and perhaps given a gift—and perhaps flattered, just after finding how foolish she had been; so it was a real relief to find those two grown-ups chatting together first about their own affairs and then about Ireland and Castle Kerraford, school and sport, in a perfectly delightful way.

"You must come to tea with me, Patsy, next time," Mrs. Partlone told her, when she kissed her good-bye, "and bring your best friend along too. If your father is going to Sumatra I have some photographs and pictures which will interest you. I have spent some very happy years out there myself and know the islands well. Mrs. Darlane will ring me up when there is a spare half holiday, and you must come over."

Patsy smiled gratefully. The mention of Sumatra had made her heart sink a little, reminding her of that long, long waiting time before she saw Dad again. But Mrs. Partlone

was so kind and so cheery that she would not allow herself to say what she might have said yesterday—namely, that she hated the very name of Sumatra.

She ran off, singing a gay little song and feeling that the black clouds which had come rolling over her sky had vanished and the sun was shining. At the foot of the stairs stood Agatha and the others waiting to welcome her.

"Come out to the lair," commanded Agatha merrily. "We want to look at you, Pats, and see what it looks like to be a heroine. Ann, the new housemaid, says that the old dame you rescued came to tea to-day; did she give you a diamond ring or a gold watch as a memorial, duck?"

Patsy frowned. "No, she did not," she retorted. "I'm glad she didn't. I'd have hated it. And if you talk of being a heroine I'll quit the band at once. It's too futile."

"Hark and listen," teased Myra. "Humility becomes you well, sweet maid. But never mind! All is well and Ag—a—tha has had an express letter from Cis asking her to wire or 'phone and say we are all safe. She and Pat had an awful half-hour yesterday when they heard about the fire; but they got through to the police and found

out we were not amongst the casualties. I don't think they will ever desert us again."

"More likely never invite us," retorted Agatha, "but we can exist without them, and already I have plans, great plans, ready to be developed. Hie to the lair, and you shall hear—after Patsy has told her tale. You mustn't let your old lady drop, Pats; she might be useful—most useful. Get us an invite, child, and we will all accept, whilst strawberries are still ripe."

"I prefer raspberries," said Myra.

But Patsy did not respond. She was wondering whether her membership in the Triton band would survive that meeting.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PATSY GOES TO THE RESCUE

PATSY was not wasting time with a long story about her own adventures, and neither did she find the Tritons inclined to extol her. Agatha patted her on the back; Pauline with mock ceremony handed her a really cleverly made putty medal; but they were more than half inclined to make a joke of the whole business. Agatha, who prided herself on her wit and mimicry, made them all laugh by describing the comic side of the amazing panic; in fact all the trio seemed to have quite forgotten the serious side of it, and that some score of men, women, and young girls lay critically ill in hospital and at home as a result of the accident.

Patsy was sensitive to the ill-timed jesting, but not brave enough to strike the serious note which she was sure Carol would have fearlessly struck had she been there.

"And what of the after-clap?" said Pauline,

when they had told how they had found their own particular taxi-man on the point of driving off with a farmer's lady and three daughters. "Has Mrs. Darlane read the riot act to our only Patsy as well as to three unheroic atoms?"

Patsy reddened, and Agatha, quick to note her annoyance, instantly changed the conversation.

"It is Midsummer Eve, maids all," said she, "and never could Tritons let the fateful Eve go by without a frolic. Midsummer Eve—it sounds so sweetly romantic. Do we favour romance or sport? Like wise Tritons we'll combine the two. Next Thursday, after lights are out, we shall descend to the schoolroom, open the window as oft on a stilly night we have done before, and go out over the plank and through the hole in the hedge on to the moor. I want to see the ghostly mermaids washing their clothes in the pool by Warley Moor. So awfully interesting, girls, from an historical research point of view, to see what sort of clothing mermaids wear. Afterwards, we'll frolic across to the fairies' ring and wish the seven wishes granted by Queen Mab in gratitude to the shepherdess who saved her from the thorns of a bramble bush. If we want

food to eat we will get tarts and pies in the usual way."

"Carried anonymously," said Pauline, waving her arms. "Hurrah for fairy night! Agatha wouldn't make too bad a fairy queen, eh?"

Agatha was watching Patsy.

"Well?" she asked sharply. "What's wrong? Carol will still be away, so you need not be afraid of poor pussy perfect prefect."

"Very funny," said Patsy briefly, "but what about our all having promised Mrs. Darlane to play the game and keep rules? She would, well —you know what she would say if she knew we were going out at night on to the moors. It would mean breaking our promise after she trusted us."

Pauline yawned; Myra tittered; Agatha watched the speaker intently.

"Meaning," said she at last, "that you are joining the perfect prefect band and break your comrade promise to Tritons three?"

"What nonsense!" retorted Patsy vexedly. "I'm not breaking or rejecting. I want to be a comrade and a sport. But I've promised Mrs. Darlane to try to keep her rules, so I can't join the Midsummer Eve frolic! That's that."

"You're fairly outspoken," mocked Pauline, "and I suppose will continue to speak out all about us to Carol and the govs."

Patsy hesitated. "I shall not give you away," she replied slowly, "but I shan't join up. If you cared to run the Tritons as a sporting club keeping faith with Mrs. Darlane we could have fun enough. But I shan't break rules. Do you want me to resign?"

Agatha stretched her arms, yawning.

"We shall certainly break rules," she said. "The promise we gave is just about as binding as the one I made when I became a Guide. I meant every syllable of the law, but a week after I had almost forgotten how to repeat it—still less to keep it. No one expects us to keep to the letter of such laws. Everyone breaks them, and life would be soppy if we never had any larks. The fun is clean enough, and if you are a sport you'll not fuss about the letter of the thing, but just obey the spirit."

She had begun in a drawl, but long before the end she was speaking briskly, persuasively, with a smile of invitation on her pretty lips. It was a moment of testing to Patsy. She would have revelled in going ghost-seeing, and the legend of

the cleanly mermaids had always intrigued her. It was the very sort of adventure she adored—and yet she had given a promise she regarded as wholly binding.

"Come on and don't be a mug," said Pauline.

But Patsy shook her head.

"If you mean to break rules," said she determinedly, "I'm not coming. I gave my word."

"You seem to have done that in several directions," said Agatha carelessly, "but no matter. We shall survive your desertion. I suppose the weight of the heroine's crown has been too heavy for you. Ta-ta, and I hope in time you too will become a P.P., just to edify naughty little girls like us."

She stood, half smiling, sly, reproachful, attractive. Yes, she always was that, and good-hearted too! There was no malice about Agatha, none of the school traitress or plotter, but just a frivolous, selfish little girl who thought of herself first in everything.

Patsy did not need to be told twice to go, but she went reluctantly because, well, she was not fifteen yet, and fun is fun, even when it means broken rules; and the fun of seeing ghostly mermaids and fairy rings, not to mention climbing

out of schoolroom windows near the witching hour of midnight, was very real sport indeed to Patsy from the Wilds. And during the next few days there was more than one occasion when Patsy wished she had said "Yes" to the jolly band of Tritons. They always looked so full of mirth whenever she met them, so full of laughter and nonsense, whilst Patsy, without the solace of Carol's friendship, was very lonely in spite of the advances of the cricketers who were readier than ever to welcome the heroine of the fire to their hearts—and sports.

There was a thrilling account of the fire and a vivid description of Patsy's heroism in the local paper which the housemaid brought for her to read. Patsy would have loved to send Dad a copy of that paper but did not like the idea of self-advertisement. She was reading it over to herself however, when Jeanie, the kitchen girl, found her perched on a bough of the chestnut tree near the garden wall. Jeanie's rosy face was streaked by tears, and she looked the very picture of woe.

"Oh, miss," she sobbed, "oh, miss, whatever will Mother do? Tom's had his notice given, and Mr. Hardy, the gardener, has give him his money and told him he needn't come again. Tom's gone

home broken-hearted, for 'deed he didn't think no harm in doing what you all asked him, and Dad will half kill him when he hears, for—for he thinks the world of the missus, and now if Cook hears I've carried messages I'll get the sack too."

Down came Patsy off her perch.

"What do you mean, Jeanie?" she asked. "Tom sacked and you likely to be sacked. Why?"

Jeanie could hardly explain for sobs—of course she thought Miss Patsy knew.

"Ain't you one of them Try-ons, miss?" she asked innocently. "I thought as how you was —same as Miss Agatha and Miss Pauline. Tom's bin fetchin' and carryin' for them, and so've I. P'raps we knew we didn't ought to, but they gave us silver money, and Mother very ill and us poor we took it and never gave it a thought, but as how you was ladies up to—to a game, but Mr. Hardy he found out and made young Tom confess, which Tom not meaning nohow to give away them as had been good to him he refused to give no names.

"Mr. Hardy he argues, and Cook she argues. They puts it to Tom that, while he's loyal to them as gives him cake, he's false to her as gives him bread an' butter. Tom near broke down, he did,

but nothing moves him. 'If I've done wrong I'll go,' says he, 'but I won't do wrong twice by tellin' on them as has been my friends.' So Mr. Hardy pays his money, and he's gone."

"But," urged Patsy, horrified, "have you told Miss Agatha or the others? They would never let Tom go when it was their fault. They bribed him."

Jeanie shook her head. "It's awful when you finds out what you've bin doin' for sake of a few shillin's, miss," she moaned, "and we've learned our lesson hard. We didn't mean harm, and the little ladies didn't. I spoke to Miss Pauline, an' she says Tom will get a better place any day. She wanted to send him half a crown, but I wouldn't take it. I—I'm thinkin' of how awful Dad'll carry on when Tom tells him he has the sack and likely without a character. Tom won't dursen tell Father what it was about for fear of him comin' an' carryin' on to Miss Agatha and the Try-ons."

"Look here," said Patsy, "we can't let your brother be sent away like this. I—er—used to be a Triton, but I—I, well, I would never have asked you or Tom to help in our adventures. I feel awful about it. I shall go at once and tell your father. Where do you live?"

Jeanie had dried her tears but still hesitated.

"It's right over by the Wizard's Gap, miss," she said, "acrost the little cove and round by the Wolf's Head. It's a twenty minutes' walk even by the sands—and it's gettin' near tea-time."

"And Carol may be home this afternoon," thought Patsy. "She will be sure to want to see me. Yet it's not fair Tom should get into all this trouble. I must go and tell his father it was—our fault." She looked at Jeanie who stood half expectant, half deprecating. "I shall go and tell your father it was not Tom's fault," said she, and was up over the wall before Jeanie could reply or Patsy herself remember the rule she was breaking.

## CHAPTER IX

### PATSY IN PERIL

Do you know the feeling of thinking you are doing something very kind and self-sacrificing in order to save an innocent person from undeserved punishment, and then finding you need not have worried? If so, you will know how Patsy felt as she stood on the threshold of quite a snug little kitchen and saw Tom, the garden boy, munching away at bread and dripping amongst half a dozen younger brothers and sisters, whilst his parents sat superintending the meal and not looking—at least Tom's father was not looking—the least like half murdering his son.

Tom blushed at sight of breathless Patsy, whilst Jack Wilton, his father, rose and saluted after the manner of an old soldier.

"Oh, don't let me disturb you, please!" protested Patsy, hot and flushed. "I—I only came because of Tom losing his job. I am so very sorry indeed, and it was not

his fault one little bit. I—I do hope it is all right."

Mr. Wilton shook his head.

"I've spoke serious to Tom, miss," he said, "and he's told me the truth. I shall make it my business to see Mr. Hardy, but, apart from that, Tom's as well away. He's old enough for a better job, and Jeanie will get on better without him there to gossip to. In course I don't like the way of Tom's dismissal, and if Mr. Hardy speaks detrimental of my boy's character he'll have to prove his words. Tom's been foolish to take tips from little ladies, but he ain't the first to take tips which have no business to come his way, so I shan't let one slur lie on him, as Mr. Hardy will see. I'm sorry if it was to come out that you little ladies has been buying cakes and toffees on the sly, but your lady mistress won't make any undue trouble over that. So there the matter ends, and Tom ought to find his manners to stand up and thank you for your interest in him."

Patsy did not know whether to laugh or be angry. After all, this was no business of hers, and she had been in too great haste to take up the cudgels for Tom. It was no use explaining or arguing. She was satisfied Tom was not being

half killed, and had a father to champion him as well as showing no wish to suffer in silence for the sake of those who had tempted him. So Patsy, briefly bidding the family party good-night, hurried away. Carol might have come, and how vexing it was to think she should be away breaking rules so thoughtlessly just when she wanted to make a compact of friendship with the head prefect.

"It's early," she thought, "and I shall be home in twenty minutes if I cross the sands. I shall run!"

What a mountain out of a mole-hill Jeanie had made! What folly it had been to come, and yet how she would have loved to linger on those yellow sands and watch the waves come rolling in! With a sigh Patsy remembered that it was forbidden to come down on the shore. She really had a head like a sieve to-day, but she could honestly say that she had forgotten rules in her longing to see justice done.

"I'll mind my own business in future," she was telling herself, as she sprang lightly from rock to rock. She sprang lightly indeed, but slipped on the seaweed a second later, falling heavily into a shallow pool. Dazed and bewildered, Patsy tried

to scramble up—only to find she could not stand. She had hurt her knee somehow, and the pain was so intense when she put her foot to the ground that she could not walk. She sat rocking herself to and fro, and wondering however she could have been so foolish. The pain was subsiding a little now, but she knew it would be as bad again if she put her foot to the ground.

And there was no one here at all. Boom! A big wave had broken over the rocks, and the foaming waters came rushing up to refill those little seaweedy pools. Patsy looked at the white froth left behind and suddenly realized the peril of her position. She lay helpless here on the rocks, and the tide was coming in.

A thrill of horror ran through the little prisoner. Wide-eyed, white-cheeked, she watched the next wave breaking still nearer to where she lay.

"I—must crawl up under the cliff," she whispered; "someone is sure to pass."

Then, looking at the waves dashing up to the foot of sentinel cliffs at the entrance to the cave, she realized once again that no one would pass. She had come—madly—to make a short cut which was only possible at low tide. Without daring to think, Patsy turned over and began

very painfully to crawl or drag herself up over the rocks and through shallow pools on to the shingle. Did the waves reach as high as this place? She shuddered as she read the answer in pebbles still wet with the water. Here she must lie waiting for the end to come. Here she must lie waiting for the treacherous waves to creep up nearer—nearer till they reached—and passed—and engulfed her.

A cry rose to her lips—a strange, shrill cry of agony which was answered by a nesting seagull before her on the ledge. She looked up to see the bird, and, as she did so, noted the high-water line on the grey, chalky wall above her head. If only she could have climbed!

Faint with pain, she lay inert for a time, a strange sense of drifting out with the tide upon her. She thought of home, of Dad, of Mary Anna, Terry, all the sweet, dear days of the past. Then school days loomed large, Carol a central figure, Carol who would be looking for her, ready to welcome her as comrade and friend. Mrs. Darlane would have told Carol of her wish, and Carol would not fail. No, it was she, Patsy, who had always failed Carol. With a sob Patsy tried to drag herself up; her knee was less painful, but

she dared not try to stand; yet the waves were creeping nearer—the rocks were covered.

"Help! Help!" Terror struck at her heart. She was afraid to die—*afraid*! "Help! Help!"

Was that the gull screaming out its mockery of her pain? No, it was no gull, but a voice—a voice drifting down to her from high above on the cliff top—a voice she knew even in her faintness and fear. It was Carol who cried to her.

"Patsy! Patsy! Look up! Patsy! I'm coming."

It did not seem possible. It was Carol climbing down to her—Carol, slim, dominant, purposeful, who was acting so madly, since even if she came down she could not help Patsy to climb.

Rousing herself, the latter placed her hands round her mouth.

"Go back," she cried, "go back. I'm—lame. I can't climb. Go—back."

But Carol was climbing down regardless of the words—nearer, nearer—with a smile on her lips and no fear in her grey eyes. Patsy wrung her hands.

"Go back," she sobbed, "or you'll be drowned entirely." And the waves were creeping nearer all the time.

Now Carol was beside her, bending to lift the younger girl in her arms, whilst Patsy, worn with pain, could only cling to her.

"I saw you crawling up," panted Carol; "they told me at the cottage you had come this way but thought you might have been turned back by the tide. I sent Tom for Rowland's boat when I saw you—see, it is rounding the Wolf's Head —and will come right close. I can carry you down."

So Patsy was not going to die. There was no need to rally her courage to face the great ordeal as Dad would have expected her to; she was going to live. Already she could see the stalwart figure of the boatman bending over his oars. If the waves raced over the sands, the boat raced swiftly over the waves, and Carol was carrying her down, knee deep in water, to meet their rescuer.

"Oh, Carol! Carol!" sobbed Patsy. "We're saved, and you have saved me." And she remembered nothing more till she opened her eyes to find Nannie and Mrs. Darlane with Dr. Reckitt bending over her.

"I want—Carol," said Patsy. "I don't want anyone else—only Carol."

And Carol came.

* * *

"And after all," said Agatha, in her cheerful way, "the term hasn't been half bad. The Tritons have become horribly respectable, but they are sure to burst out again after the hols.; and anyhow, Patsy, you're a sport if you are not a Triton at heart. I think you've done Carol good too. There she is beckoning you. If you are back from the fairy godmother's in time, come to our pow-wow under the walnut tree. You can bring Carol if you like—we are quite in order."

How Patsy laughed as she danced off! She was glad Agatha and Co. did not look on her as a deserter. Mrs. Partlone had invited Patsy and Carol to tea and to talk special business this afternoon—an invitation which sounded mysterious. Patsy was Carol's shadow by this time. Ever since her rescue from drowning, when Carol had risked her life for the girl who for weeks had refused all overtures of friendship, Patsy had been devoted to the comrade she had secretly loved from the first.

Carol had had a disappointment herself later, for her parents were going to leave her to the care of an aunt whilst they went for a health cure.

Patsy had been wondering if that aunt would have room for her in the little house in Exeter, but no invitation had come.

Mrs. Partlone welcomed both visitors quite tenderly.

"I am going away in two weeks' time," she said, as they sat at tea, "for a sea trip and to visit some old friends. I shall be away for some months."

Patsy looked disappointed.

"Everyone will have gone then," she sighed. "And I shall be all alone. Even Mrs. Darlane is going away."

"Patsy dear," said the little old lady kindly, "I have a very big surprise for you—and Carol, and the best thing to say before I start explanations is to ask neither of you to speak till I have quite finished. Perhaps my news is rather like a story with an unexpected ending. You must promise to wait patiently for the ending."

How thrilling it was! Of course the girls promised, and then nearly forgot immediately, as Mrs. Partlone's beginning was so startling.

"I have been very busy, girls," said she, "cabling and writing to the very last people you would suppose. I mean your parents. Hush,

dears, remember your promise! You see, Mrs. Darlane had a letter, posted the day Sir Thomas and Lady O'Manlon sailed for Sumatra. It was to tell her that Lady O'Manlon's brother-in-law had died suddenly, and his wife was very ill—so ill she cannot get better, and when she has gone Lady O'Manlon will be mistress of a large estate in Sumatra worth many thousands of pounds. So she will have to stay out there till after her sister's death to be there to arrange about and to sell the property. In this case she and Sir Thomas might be away till next summer."

Patsy's face became a study.

" Mrs. Darlane knew," continued Mrs. Partlone, " that I was going out to Sumatra, and Sir Thomas said in his letter he would give much to have Patsy with him for a few weeks. So we cabled and have just received—hush, Patsy—a cable asking me to bring Patsy and her friend as I suggested. This is Carol's part of the story, for her father ought to remain over Christmas in Switzerland, and the idea came to Mrs. Darlane and myself that if I took you two young women with me to Sumatra it would be a tremendous education and experience for you both, an experience neither of you would be likely to get

again, and—everyone will be happy, satisfied, and content, myself——"

But at this point it became impossible for the girls to remain silent any longer. Their breath had been taken away at first, but now they had *that* back again they were just wanting to scream the tale of their excitement. Patsy went fairly wild, and even the more staid Carol laughed and capered, hugged the fairy god-mother, and at last sank exhausted beside Patsy on the rug.

"I don't believe we have even said 'thank you,'" she panted, "but, oh, Mrs. Partlone—it's too wonderful! Sumatra! And a sea voyage—and——"

"Adventure," sang Patsy, sitting back on her heels. "Shure, it will be one big adventure from beginning to end. Lovely—perfect—and if I hugged you as I wanted to, Mrs. Partlone, I believe I'd squeeze every breath out of your body. And so—well, it's two saints you'll take, for we couldn't do a thing to worry such a real darling."

And, though Mrs. Partlone laughed and kissed those eager lassies, telling them she believed they would be just angels, she knew much better than to expect it to be true.

You can imagine what returning to school

meant that evening. Mrs. Darlane was waiting to talk over the astounding programme, whilst afterwards Carol and Patsy held a high court to which the envious and the generous came to hear of all the wonders which lay before Patsy from the Wilds and that friend so oddly chosen, Carol Harless, the perfect prefect!

"There is only one grouse I have," concluded Agatha, "which is that we should have had such a topping term if you had both been here. Now —I'm rather afraid, Carol, that we shall return to the path of the Tritons instead of banding together as female Knights of King Arthur. We must wait for you two heroines to return from— I wonder what sort of snaky adventure!"

"I wonder too," said Carol thoughtfully.

But Patsy chuckled. Whatever thrills lay before her in that romantic land so far away she was ready for them all. And actually she had forgiven that step-mother-to-be because, you see, if it had not been for her there would never have been this trip to—was it fairyland?

## CHAPTER X

### PERIL AT SEA

It is a great gift to find enjoyment in all sorts of jobs, and if you can call starting off on a voyage across the salt seas to an unknown Eden a *job*, you'll understand how easy it was for Carol and Patsy to find joy in it. Mrs. Darlane played fairy god-mother to Patsy right the way through and took her to Exeter even before the end of term to "fit her out." Patsy stood round-eyed and enraptured at sight of dainty frocks, cosy travelling coat, rug, boots. It was breathless.

It was exciting to go to bed in the middle of the day and wake up in the evening, ready for supper before the start. Patsy, of course, got in such a flurry that she lost her keys, her purse, and might have lost her head had it been loose.

"It's a good thing you have a calming influence over me, Carol," she declared, as she sat tucked

between Ann, the maid, and Mrs. Partlone's dressing-case on the back seat of the motor-car, "or it's mad I should go entirely."

Both girls were sure that they would not want to close their eyes all night, and yet before Southampton was reached they had both paid a short visit to dreamland and awoke half ashamed of themselves to enter into the excitement of going aboard.

Ann Jinks, Mrs. Partlone's quiet, capable maid, piloted the party with Carol's help on to the deck, but there an argument rose about the cabins, which ended in a hasty decision for Mrs. Partlone and Ann to have one cabin and the girls another. Secretly, Carol and Patsy were delighted. This wee den with its berths and its room-saving accommodation was a revelation, and they were soon laughing and searching, chattering and peeping out to peer along the passages, still crowded with hurrying passengers.

"It's the most distressful steamer that ever yet was seen," said Patsy under her breath. "What a panic everyone is in! I'm glad we settled in first. Now do let's go on deck; we must see the last of old England."

Mrs. Partlone and Ann were not on deck, and

the girls, holding fast to the rails, enjoyed the full thrill of the moment when the great steamer left her moorings and went gliding out over the deep followed by the final farewell greetings of those on land.

"I always did hate—and love and adore sob-stuff," whispered Patsy to her chum as they returned to their den with the resolve only just to find out what berths aboard the *Carisbrooke* really felt like.

It was a triumph to both girls to find the next day that all the gloomy prophecies about sea sickness were not fulfilled. They "went slow" at their first breakfast to the great amusement of some of the passengers who had been attracted at once by the bright girlish faces and the enthusiasm of these fellow travellers. Patsy at once chummed with a Captain and Mrs. Lathways who sat near them and who, she discovered, were also going to Sumatra.

"You will enjoy every hour," declared Eve Lathways kindly. "I hope we shall see something of you both out there."

"We are longing for adventures," said Patsy. "Mrs. Partlone is resting in her cabin to-day, but if we don't feel ill Mr. Davies, the second officer,

is going to take us over the ship about eleven o'clock."

It was rather an anxious question, but really it was amazing how different it was on this huge steamer from the experiences of cockle-shell boats, and Tom Davies found two smiling comrades awaiting the fulfilment of his promise when he came aft.

"We want to see everything," declared Patsy, "even the engine-room. How awful it must be to work in there! Carol, don't you love these ladders?"

She was the nimbler of the two in scrambling about, and Tom Davies was immensely tickled at her insatiable curiosity.

"What heaps and heaps of rope!" Patsy cried, pausing near some piled coils, and then: "Why," she whispered breathlessly, "it is a leg!"

It was a leg which the owner tried hard to draw into hiding. Tom Davies pounced too soon and after a brief scuffle hauled the owner of the leg into sight. Carol and Patsy cried out in pity as they saw the ragged figure of the young stowaway, a boy of about thirteen or fourteen, red-haired, blue-eyed, defiant.

"Oh, don't punish him!" pleaded Patsy.

"Poor boy! Why did he do it? I'm sure someone was cruel to him; do be kind."

Young Davies hesitated.

"I shall have to take him before the Captain," he said. "Sorry to leave you, but—you've seen everything, I think."

"More than you expected to show us," replied Carol, with a little laugh.

But Patsy was still distressed. That stowaway was the forlornest of figures, and she was quite sure he had some pitiful history. As soon as they got back on deck she hunted out her friends of the morning and claimed Captain Lathway's sympathy.

"He told me his name was Micky Brunt and that this was his last chance," she explained; "*do* go and see the Captain; he won't listen to me"—which Ronald Lathways thought highly likely.

Neither Patsy nor Carol could settle to anything till they heard the result of that interview and made a rush for their ambassador when he appeared—smiling.

"Is he going to be allowed to come with us?" urged Patsy. "I do hope so."

"It's a sad story," said Lathways. "Micky

has never had a chance; he has no parents or relatives, and the people amongst whom he lived would soon have brought him to prison, but his one chum—a little cripple lad—had a wonderful influence over Micky, and when Ben died he vowed to escape from his bad companions and go abroad. He implored to be allowed to work his way out, and the Captain is giving him his chance."

"The darlint!" cried Patsy, tears in her eyes. "And when he gets to Sumatra we'll find him a job—I'm sure Dad will be able to."

Patsy had unbounded faith in what Dad could do, and what a help that was to Micky when she painted a picture of work, friendship, and prosperity!

Micky Brunt came to be something of a hero on board during those first few days, till the Captain interfered and said it was bad to make much of a boy who, whatever his excuse, had done a dishonest thing in coming aboard. So Micky was set his work and told to prove himself by actions, not words.

Patsy secretly thought the Captain rather too stern; she knew Micky was tremendously grateful to her and Carol, and whenever the girls could

send the extra ship's boy an encouraging word they did so.

It was the loveliest voyage. Patsy and Carol soon became popular with fellow passengers, and what fun fancy dress dances were, those games and frolics which all seemed so new and merry on board the great ship! Still more exciting were the fleeting glimpses they had of the various ports at which they called. Mrs. Partlone was such a darling; the more they got to know her the more they came to love her, whilst Captain and Mrs. Lathways were the life and soul of what Patsy called "their own special."

"Only another three days, and we shall be there," said Carol one morning as they were dressing. "It's the second chapter of the fairy tale, eh, Pat? And *how* these weeks have flown!"

"With a big whizz-bang at the end," laughed Patsy, as she watched the port-hole. "Mr. Davies is going to be right—there's rough weather ahead. Oh, Carol, would a storm be just all the fun we think it when we read about it in books?"

"Certainly not," replied Carol, "I'd simply hate one. Ugh, the waves are tumbling us about this morning!"

They were indeed, and when the girls reached deck it was to meet young Davies who promptly ordered them below to the saloon.

"Though you won't find many at breakfast I'm afraid," he added drily.

The girls were surprised to find so few breakfasters. For their own part they could not help enjoying the meal with its unexpected disasters to cups, plates, and even the dish of eggs and bacon which Smithers was bringing in, as the vessel lurched and swayed, bringing him flat on top of that nice crisp bacon. It was too bad to laugh, but who could help it? Patsy's dimples still ran riot as she stealthily climbed the companion ladder once more.

But the dimples vanished at sight of that tumult of grey waters. There were only five or six men from amongst the passengers on deck, and as the girls clung to the rail, Captain Lathways came towards them.

"You'll have to go below," he said kindly; "it's a tremendous sight but dangerous unless you have your sea-legs. Steady!"

He gripped both girls' shoulders as a huge wave swept the deck, drenching them all. The Captain was shouting orders, and both Carol and

Patsy, excited but half scared, were ready enough now to obey authority and keep below. Climbing down the ladder had become a peril in itself, and decidedly bruised and chilled the girls were glad to reach their cabin.

"It's getting rougher," said Patsy, with a little gasp as she began changing her wet clothes. "It's shure a storm even though there's no thunder. Oh!"

It was not at all nice to be flung out of one's berth against the opposite wall, and by the time Patsy had been able to steady herself the girls realized that this was going to be a grim day of battle. Carol was splendid; she thought more carefully than Patsy, though the latter had more than one happy inspiration during those waiting hours.

Without speaking of danger they both put on all the clothes they could, stuffed money and small valuables in their pockets, and then succeeded in staggering out into the passage. To their surprise other passengers were already there, several of the women obviously frightened. The ship pitched and plunged in a way calculated to cause panic. Mrs. Partlone had not left her cabin, and the girls hurried along to join her. They were

more excited than scared when at the door of their old friend's cabin they met Tom Davies.

"Is it a storm?" asked Patsy. "'Tis shure a hurricane!"

Davies smiled. "We are going to have a rough time," he replied; "the gale comes from an ugly quarter, but the *Carisbrooke* will weather it all right."

Mrs. Partlone was delighted to see her "children" and quietly approved their preparations; she and Ann were also ready for emergencies, and long before that difficult day was over those aboard realized the necessity to be prepared. For the *Carisbrooke* was being driven far out of her course by that terrible gale. Gallantly, the officers and crew fought against the fury of the wind and waves, but as darkness fell before its time all knew that night brought added danger.

There had been no possibility of taking meals in the deserted dining saloon, but the sailors brought food supplies to those who crowded the other saloons and passages. No one thought of sleep—it took them all their time to remain seated without being flung from side to side. Hour after hour passed. The Chaplain and Captain Lathways held a short service of prayer and hymn

singing, and the response had been eloquent. About eleven o'clock, however, a thrill of terror ran through all as a terrific crash told that the worst fears were realized.

The steamer had struck a reef of submerged rocks, they learned later. Instantly all was confusion. Passengers rushed to their cabins for their lifebelts, and the stewards passed from one to the other giving advice and instructions.

Patsy and Carol remained "on guard" beside Mrs. Partlone who was seated near the open door of her cabin whilst the first rush of panic-stricken passengers fled by towards the companion. What use would it have been to try to get that frail little woman up those crowded stairs where men, women, and children were fighting to escape?

The lights had gone out almost at once, and in the darkness the girls could hear Ann Jinks praying aloud. It was a time of terror neither of them would ever forget, and how hard it was to remain at their post as they heard shouts and cries and felt the reeling motion of the doomed vessel! Then Mrs. Partlone's voice rose in clear tones of command.

"Ann, take the young ladies and get into one of the boats. They are my precious charge."

Ann did not move, and Carol's answer came with firm decision.

"Don't ask the impossible, dear Tante," she pleaded; "it would only distress us to refuse, and you know we can't leave you."

"Shure!" gasped Patsy.

The stream of terrified passengers had ceased to press and push outside; as Patsy peered out it seemed as though the passage was clear, but, when she moved a step forward, a light shone down from the empty ladder.

"Patsy!" cried Tom Davies, and how gladly she answered!

"We are here; come and take care of Tante. Oh, I'm glad!"

Tears rolled down the girl's cheeks in relief; the rushing of water—somewhere near—had become awesome; the darkness had been the very shadow of death; and the little party of four came out now from shelter thrilled by hope of deliverance.

Young Davies had no time to waste in words; his uniform was drenched, and there was a gash across his forehead. No need to ask for news; his face told the tale.

Ann had one of Mrs. Partlone's arms, and Tom Davies took the other, the girls following closely.

They were thankful to be relieved of responsibility, and thrilled by admiration for that brave old friend who walked dauntlessly up the swaying ladder—up—up till the deck was reached.

Patsy and Carol clung together. All at once they were launched into the chaos and horror of a midnight wreck, and it was somehow so different from any description they had ever read. The force of the wind made speech impossible; the hurrying of men and women over the slippery boards made a queer shuffling amongst the turmoil of tempest. Now and again a cry of despair rose as a mighty wave swept over the rail and across the lower decks. Without seeing, the girls knew lives were being carried out into eternity every minute. A watery moon shone out behind scudding clouds; the roaring of waves and winds rose to a terrific chant.

A shout echoed from the bridge where, through a megaphone, the Captain issued his orders. The boats were being launched. The throng of people moved forward, and in the press the girls lost sight of their companions. Without speaking they clung fast together unnoticed for some time.

Clutching the inner rail, they watched the women being hurried to the side of the vessel, but

they could not see the launching of the boats till one of the passengers—Captain Lathways—spied Patsy and caught her by the shoulder. They could not hear what he said but noticed his wife was beside him. Then, as they neared the rail, they had a glimpse of a crowded boat with a light shining on the faces of the occupants. Yes, yes! Tom Davies was rowing; Mrs. Partlone and Ann were there. Carol thought Ann saw them and flung up her arm, but the next moment all was darkness—a darkness in which fear overcame many of the men from the lower deck and a rush was made.

It was terrible, and Carol and Patsy were thankful for the friends who still kept by their side. They could hear Captain Lathways shout something, and then two sailors came up, and with them was Micky Brunt, the stowaway. Lantern light showed them Micky, drenched, but with no sign of fear on his freckled face as he came to guide the others to where on that treacherous lower deck lay a rough raft.

Carol and Patsy understood the dumb show better than Eve Lathways, but instinct was stronger still, and Patsy's after memory was of someone twisting rope about her body and

flinging her out into space. She clung giddily, despairingly, to that wet rope, till somehow she felt wet boards under her feet and fell sprawling across the raft, which, freed from moorings, was swept out and away from the fated vessel.

Too dazed quite to understand, Patsy clung to the thing nearest and saw—not far off—the great steamer pitching over sideways with a terrible roaring, and then—all was darkness, and wetness, and fear, till the something she clutched rolled over nearer, and she found it was Carol's hair she had grabbed so fast. There they lay, in each other's arms and wondered as the waves carried them, now high, now low, when Death would come. And in their ears roared the music of wind and waves.

## CHAPTER XI

### A STRANGE LAND

DAWN! It was amazing. Patsy sat up and just wondered in hopeless perplexity why she could not remember what had happened. She had not been asleep, but she must have lost consciousness and only now recovered enough of her senses to know she was cold, hungry, achey, and wet! Then she looked around and saw Carol who was crawling back to where she crouched. What manner of bed was this? What would the grey dawn show? Patsy pushed a great pile of coats and found that behind it lay someone who moved and groaned.

"Carol!" she gasped. "Oh!"

She had seen the waste of waters, comparatively calm after last night's gale, had realized this was a raft drifting over unknown, ghostly grey waters, and that beside her lay Captain Lathways, a bandage across his head, his face ghastly, whilst his wife knelt beside him, hardly recognizable

with wet locks about her neck, her face white and stricken.

There were others too—one of the sailors, no, two, and Micky. Micky, the most alive of the lot, fixing a remnant of shirt on to a pole to attract the attention of some passing vessel.

Micky saved the situation by taking that job on. It rallied the sailors, and Carol, and lastly Patsy to work at something. Carol had been awake to the work claiming her for an hour past and was bringing breakfast of a sort to Mrs. Lathways—Bovril, ship's biscuit, tinned milk. Could the materials serve the injured man at all?

Eve Lathways was hopeful. The tinned milk was a godsend. But what of the others? Was there more milk—and water? Carol tried to be cheery.

"Plenty, no doubt—we'll explore. Go ahead, please," she urged. "Is Captain Lathways much hurt?"

The young wife tried to be brave too.

"I think only a broken arm and the head wound, but thank God for such an escape."

They left her to her task and crawled to where the men and Micky squatted.

"Where are we?" asked Carol. "W—we must have got much nearer the islands. I mean the *Carisbrooke* was flying along all day yesterday."

Donald, a grizzled salt, shook his head.

"Out of her course, missie," said he. "God knows where we are, but no one else. There's only one thing certain and that is——"

He pointed to where the girls saw in the morning light a black fin showing above water.

"What is it?" asked Patsy, and answered her own question—"Sharks?"

Donald nodded. "On the war-path," said he, "but forewarned is forearmed. It's calm enough this morning, and them sharkses can go elsewhere for breakfast."

Carol shuddered. She did not ask any more questions, but as she looked round and saw water everywhere her heart sank. Patsy was more of an optimist and was congratulating Micky on his flag.

"Grand!" said she. "And who will shure see us first on the desert island?"

Micky chuckled. "The sea serpents," said he, "or one of them old beasts from the Garden of

Eden, what we sees in pictures with hornses and trunks and six legs. If I had a gun I wouldn't mind."

Patsy cocked an eye in the direction of the pile of supplies.

"Did anyone think of revolvers?" she asked, and Carol laughed.

It was a good thing to be able to laugh that day, for the burning rays of the sun caused the castaways sore distress. Captain Lathways became delirious, and it was decided that all the milk should be kept for him. There was very little water and no food beyond a few biscuits and two more bottles of Bovril. Patsy and Carol refused any sort of extra rations but were glad enough to forget their hunger in sleep.

Patsy awoke first to find the sunset glow creeping over the waters and all aboard the raft asleep except Donald, on watch on one side, and Micky —a queer towsled figure—intent on fishing. Patsy crept close up behind the latter to ask what sport he had had. There was no wind blowing though the raft drifted at a fair rate through the waters, and Patsy's sharp eyes fancied she saw more than one black fin showing in the wake of their strange craft.

"Micky!" she whispered, longing to hear another voice, and as she spoke she became aware of an astounding fact.

*Micky had fallen asleep.* His thin little hands still gripped the broken pole which was his rod, the line still trailed, but exhaustion had overcome the gallant angler, and to Patsy's horror he suddenly swayed and fell, pitching forward into the water. Instantly the treacherous owner of a black fin disappeared. Patsy was very wide awake now! Micky, awakened by his plunge, had grabbed the edge of the raft, and he did not know his danger. Patsy did! She was flat on the raft and gripped Micky. Her face was close to the boy's.

"For your life," she gasped, "the shark!"

He knew now, and his cheeks paled, but he was fighting hard, with Patsy's help. Would she be dragged over or he dragged up? Higher, higher, and the shark was turning on its back. A lucky delay! Micky was alone now; he had his balance, and Patsy with ready presence of mind had hold of the pole, driving it down, down into the grey waters. The huge fish, perplexed momentarily by the splashing and commotion, swam back, but it was a broken pole he had for

supper, whilst Micky lay spread out on the raft, trying to get breath for a cheer.

Donald Gaston had seen something of the adventure but too late to help. He hauled Micky to his feet and grunted out a word of praise for Patsy, but Micky's cheer was drowned in tears.

"I'll—I'll never forget, never," he vowed; "it's meself will do the great thing one day for you, colleen."

And Patsy beamed. She didn't want praise or thanks, but she was profoundly thankful she had cheated that shark. But sharks and gratitude were forgotten just then, for Roger Barnes, the second sailor, had raised a shout. Land! Even Mrs. Lathways left her sleeping husband to come and stand with the rest and see the long white line of coast, the still more dimly seen background of trees, with a dark hillside rising behind.

"An island, so Donald says," whispered Carol to Patsy. "Oh, Patsy, shall we ever finish drinking when we find water?"

It was strange how acute both hunger and thirst became now that hope dawned. Already the babble of a rivulet echoed ghost-like in their

ears; those were surely fruit trees which they saw silhouetted against a purple sky.

Then Micky's shrill chant gave its news.

"A boat! A boat."

How their pulses raced as anxious eyes peered through the gloom to see what manner of rescuers these were! Would they be treacherous natives, cannibals, enemies who, fearful for themselves, might kill first and enquire afterwards? A wave larger than the rest was carrying them nearer, nearer. They could see now. A white man in a linen suit, the lower part of his face concealed by a short beard, stood up, signalling to them, waving to them. Across the waters came the sound of his voice:

"Who are you?"

An English voice. Then they had found friends. Patsy nearly forgot sharks and was all but climbing down into the shallow waters, but there was no need, for the boat was alongside now, and the white-clad figure had sprung on to the raft followed by a boy of thirteen and several strange-looking natives.

Mrs. Lathways was the first to greet the newcomers, and the girls, standing by, heard the quick words of introduction.

"My name is Cecil Barnley," said the Englishman. "I am a missionary living here on this small island with my wife and boy. The natives are most friendly and inoffensive. We can at least offer you a welcome and some degree of comfort. I take it you have been wrecked—we knew there must have been a disaster not far from here as some of the wreckage has begun to drift in."

As he spoke he and his companions were helping to lift Ronald Lathways and carry him to the boat. The natives had entered the shallow water, making a hideous din to scare any adventurous shark. Patsy and Carol were escorted to the boat by the thirteen-year-old boy, Jack, who openly envied them the topping adventure of shipwreck. He and Micky grinned at each other from afar, each recognizing a kindred spirit. It was too dark by the time they reached the shore to be able to see much beyond the fact that the sand was unusually white and the rocks looked positively ghostly; palm trees and a thick undergrowth of shrubs, flowers, and high grasses suggested beauty when seen by daylight.

Micky whispered an enquiry as to tigers which highly amused Jack, but if there were no tigers

there seemed to be plenty of shrill-voiced birds which made the forest echo with a babel of sound.

Mrs. Barnley was awaiting their arrival on the verandah and what a relief it was to Mrs. Lathways to see her husband settled in a comfortable bed. Whilst the elders saw to the well-being of their sick guest Jack was playing host at a tea-table which to starving visitors displayed the most glorious feast ever seen—cakes, and fruit, and quaint delicious bread. Patsy ate and ate, even outdoing Carol and causing Jack the greatest joy.

"You're a sport, I know you are," he told her. "I expect she"—nodding to Carol who was talking to Mrs. Barnley who had just come in—"is too. I'll have heaps to show you. You aren't much older than I am, anyway, and this island is topping—so are the natives. Tifo and Malos are my best friends. They don't believe in the goddess of the volcano like the others; they are really Christians—the others are wobblers, at least some of them."

Patsy was highly amused. That wonderful meal had put new life into her, and she felt almost but not quite ready to explore. But a

sudden sleepiness was stealing over her, and Mrs. Barnley, guessing how tired these younger guests must be, carried them off to bed in the little white-curtained room near the verandah declaring that to-morrow there would be time for everything.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE EAR OF GENTRA

"CAN you shoot?" asked Jack eagerly as he came out on to the verandah where the girls were seated awaiting his escort. Everyone in that household seemed busy except Carol and Patsy, though Mrs. Barnley declared they had done their share and more than their share too in household duties. Now Jack was free to entertain them, and they were ready to welcome him. It was rather *infra dig*, to own that shooting was not amongst their accomplishments, but Jack took the confession very well.

"You'll soon learn," he said. "And Dad thinks you ought to carry revolvers; he's got some to give you, but you won't want them to-day. We'll go and see the volcano; you'll like that, and it's the most important thing on the island."

Patsy and Carol were prepared to see everything this morning. The sun was shining, and

that island was a land of perpetual surprise and delight. Carol would have liked to linger in the native village, if village it could be called, which had grouped itself around the missionary's house. The queer little huts—unlike any other huts in creation, but more like freakish beehives—were dotted about in a wide clearing, and their owners, still more freakish, gathered together to talk, or went stolidly about their simple duties. Jack introduced his special chums, Tifo and Malos, who grinned, rubbed their noses, and clutched nervously at their spears. Patsy thought them rather like amiable brown sheep, but with the children she fell straightway in love.

Jack would not allow any lingering for baby worship, however, and hurried them off down a side path where progress was again slow as they simply had to stay and admire the flowers—gorgeous blossoms with brilliant colouring but no scent.

"You'll have to hurry," Jack advised, "or you won't have time to visit the caves. They are jolly."

"Is it a real volcano?" asked Patsy. "And has it ever erupted?"

Jack chuckled. "It rumbles now," he replied,

"and has rumbled for months; the natives call it Gentra's groans. Gentra is, or used to be, their goddess. Her real home is on Black Island about three miles from here. Wait a bit, and you'll be able to see it from the Ridge."

What a scramble it was, over white rocks and through a tangle of ferns and flowers! Carol asked if there were any snakes about, but Jack only laughed.

"They won't hurt you unless you tread on them," he said consolingly; "they go slithering off like one o'clock. Now, get up here and see the view. I wish we'd brought your ship's boy. He'd have liked it."

The girls stood with their eyes shaded by their hands.

"It's lovely," cried Patsy; "look at the whiteness of the sands and the blue of the sea; it shure doesn't seem as if that sea ever got in a mad mood. And is that Black Island with the cliffs and mountain?"

"Yes," nodded Jack. "Another volcano—and a noisier one than ours. They call it the home of Gentra, and Tifo says if the rumblings get much louder the Tarmaris will be looking for maidens to be offered to Gentra's service. Dad

is on the watch—it worries him a lot, because the natives of Black Island aren't friendly. They are a different tribe from our people who call themselves Tarmenes and are quite gentle and nice. The Tarmaris are fierce and don't like missionaries. They still worship Gentra, and, if they sacrifice the girls, it will mean killing them, so dad thinks, and Tifo hints they will come to *this* island to get them. That's the story, but don't mention about the servants of Gentra at home—Dad gets so anxious. See?"

The girls nodded. Jack's story lacked detail, but they could guess a little of what lay behind, and shuddered as they looked towards the dark outline of the sister island.

"When are we likely to get another steamer to take us off?" asked Patsy abruptly.

But Jack could give no dates.

"Sometimes it's months before a vessel comes," he replied. "We get supplies about three times a year, but we can grow all sorts of things here, and there's plenty of fruit. Don't worry; you'll like our island."

That was all very well, but Carol and Patsy felt half inclined to explain that they wanted to reach their friends and had no wish at all to stay on

the island of Mifano, as they found it was called. They were sports though, and were out to make the best of a bad job, fighting against haunting fears of the fate of friends and comrades—above all, their dear Tante.

"Perhaps a steamer may come along after hearing about the *Carisbrooke*," said Carol, but Jack and Patsy did not hear for they were chasing a small white animal about the size of a hare which bounded across their path.

"You'll have to get fixed with that revolver," panted Jack. "Dad won't let me have one till I am fourteen—worse luck! Can you balance yourselves all right? If so, follow me"—and he sprang lightly down on to a narrow stepping stone, the first of twelve which made a path across the river.

It required a very good balance, and, as Carol and Patsy followed carefully, Patsy was thinking what Agatha and Co. would say could they see them. The Tritons would be hearing some tales on their return to Marcote Court.

They had reached the foot of the wooded hill they had seen from the raft and noted the rounded peak and the faint haze of smoke which gave hint of internal trouble. Close by about half a

dozen native huts were partly concealed by boulders.

"Just about twenty or so of the Tarmenes live here," said Jack. "They won't listen to Dad's teaching, though they say they would like to believe in the white man's God if it were not for fear of Gentra. Who or what Gentra is we only know through their old legends; even Tifo wags his head and sighs, saying, 'She with a great voice.' Poor old Tifo! He's a brick, but he would not dare to say anything disrespectful of Gentra."

"I want badly to see the caves," urged Patsy. "Is there time? Do say yes! And what shall we find in them?"

"Depends," said Jack. "I've never found a treasure yet, but I've looked. Tifo calls the big one 'the Ear of Gentra'—rather a tall order as Gentra lives three miles off, but there's some reason for it of course. Now, dodge—I don't want our woolly friends to see us climbing."

Several natives were moving about round their huts. Rice was growing in the open plots near, and the flowering shrubs were glorious. Jack led the way up a precipitous path, never doubting that his new friends could follow.

"The natives don't quite like us coming here," he said, "so you may not get a chance again. Keep close."

There was no fear that the girls would disobey that injunction. They were standing at the entrance to a vast cave in the hillside; a huge natural arch of rock formed the opening, and masses of rock were piled within. Jack threaded his way in and out, closely followed by his companions till they stood at the mouth of a much smaller opening which yawned at their feet.

"This is really like the 'Ear of Gentra,'" said Jack, "and if you call down it the words are echoed ever so loudly on the beach about half a mile away. That's the connection, for, if you were on the beach, you would be facing Black Island. I've tried to persuade Tifo to take me down through this opening to the shore, but he refuses, saying the spirits would devour him. How do you like the look of it all?"

Carol stood very straight. "It's somehow haunting," she said; "one is so sorry for the poor superstitious natives, and yet they make me afraid. I think your parents are heroic. I'd simply hate to live here."

Jack looked disappointed. "I love it," he

owned, "and one day even the Tarmaris will become Christians. They can't help it. Dad's sure of it too."

"You're wonderful," said Patsy, "and brave. I don't know if I could do it. Shure, I'd get tired. If I could do one big, splendid thing I would—but not to live here. I'd feel like Carol, but now—well, if it weren't for Dad and Tante I'd like to stay and get the magic of Mifano into my bones."

Jack and Carol were amused. They could not quite understand Patsy's frame of mind, and Carol was chiefly anxious to leave Gentra's domain and get back to the Mission camp as she called it.

As they left the cave and stood outside under the trees a deep rumbling sound startled them, and the ground trembled. Jack gripped Patsy's hand, and the three watching saw a sudden volume of smoke go rolling upward from the mouth of the crater, whilst the rumblings were echoed by a wild chanting of voices.

"The Tarmenes are singing Gentra to sleep," laughed Patsy.

But Jack did not echo her merriment.

"That's the biggest warning we've had," he

said, "and this spring is hot—boiling hot. Come along, girls, and we don't want to be seen."

There did not seem to be much fear of that, for there was not a sign of a native as they crossed towards the river bank. They found Mr. Barnley coming to meet them close to the village; he looked grave and shook his head as Jack told his story.

"If this hill is active they will be having clearer warning over on Black Island," he said gravely. "We must be prepared. Don't go near the volcano again, and I should prefer your not going too far into the forest, especially the girls."

Patsy, with a queer little chill at her heart, remembered what Jack had told her about the fiercer tribe from Black Island. More than ever she wished for the coming of a steamer to take them away from this lonely isle. Where *were* they? she wondered—not very far from Sumatra, though of course the steamer had been blown many miles out of her course. Patsy, slipping off by herself, sat on a fallen tree near the village thinking of Tante and praying that the boats had reached shore. And dad? Oh, the darling dad, how *he* would suffer when he learned of the foundering of the *Carisbrooke*! He would be

mourning his little Patsy, and many weeks or months might pass before he could learn she was here—on an island which would have been remarkably like the Mystery Isle of her dreams had it not been for Cecil Barnley and his family.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AMONG THE MISSING

THE night which had been one of terror to the girls had been no less fearful to Mrs. Partlone and Ann. But for the latter the old lady would have utterly refused to be lowered into the boat till she had seen Carol and Patsy safely settled. But Ann had given the nod to Jimmy Davies who had lifted Mrs. Partlone in his arms and gently lowered her over the ship's side.

"Ann, Ann," wailed Mrs. Partlone, "the girls! Where are the girls? I must go back. I——"

Ann had her arm about her mistress.

"There's Miss Carol," she cried, "by the rail, and Miss Patsy close. They'll be in the next boat, madam, never you fear"—and even as Ann spoke a huge wave carried them high, then flung them down, down, into the deepest valley of waters.

Mrs. Partlone lay unconscious, and it was better so, for some of the women were singing, others crying and praying aloud, others leaning forward

trying to pierce the inky darkness which lay over the stormy sea.

Dawn found them out there amidst the grey turmoil of waters, alone on the ocean. There was no sign of the *Carisbrooke*, except broken planks and other wreckage which drifted past the solitary boat. Mrs. Partlone, roused from her stupor to look around, whispered first Patsy's name, then Carol's. What a relief it was to the faithful Jinks when, far away on the horizon, a steamer was sighted! Hoisting a flag, the crew of the boat signalled frantically but for a time without receiving any answer. Then—

"Sighted!" cried Jimmy Davies in husky tones. "Sighted"—and he broke down into tears of thankfulness.

Yes, here came the deliverer, with the morning sunshine on its white funnel, and giving the survivors from the wreck a glimpse of the men and women crowding to the rail to watch them. Nearer, nearer! What a cry went up from those exhausted men and women! Ann sobbed with the rest for—oh, if only her dear young ladies could have been here! If only the cruel grey waters had not swallowed up merry little Miss Patsy and sweet Miss Carol!

Mrs. Partlone rallied with wonderful courage and sat resting against her faithful servant till a shout and the rushing sound of waters told of the approach of the steamer. Yes, here it was—and what numbers of sympathizing faces looked down over the taffrail at that melancholy boat-load. Then one by one the women were taken up on board the *Templar*, Mrs. Partlone fainting as they laid her on deck. It had been a terrible shock to the poor old lady, and for days she hardly remembered anything; then she awoke to face life with the fortitude her friends so much admired.

"We hope to land to-morrow," the Captain of the steamer told her. "If you care to look through this glass you will see the coast of Sumatra."

But Mrs. Partlone shook her head. All in good time they would arrive, and, alas, all in good time she would be having to tell the sad tale of Patsy's fate to her father!

"I'm sure, madam, the sooner we're back in England the better you will be pleased," declared Ann, as she guided her mistress's steps across the bridge.

But Mrs. Partlone did not reply—she was looking towards the crowd gathered on the landing-

stage. Friends would know already that the survivors of the *Carisbrooke* were aboard the *Templar*. Yes, she could see Dr. and Edith Longley, the friends with whom she would be staying; and what of that sweet-looking woman with fair hair and the kindest of faces who was coming to greet her with Dr. Longley? It was not very hard to guess who the stranger was, and Mrs. Partlone never forgot the other's look of intense anxiety as the doctor voiced her question.

"Thank God you are here, Jean!" said he. "And—Ann. But what of the two girls you were bringing? This is Lady O'Manlon."

Lady O'Manlon put out an impulsive hand and bent to kiss away the tears on the elder woman's cheeks.

"Don't distress yourself to tell us," she whispered. "I know what you have to say. I—I will go back and tell Patsy's father."

"It is always possible," said Dr. Longley sympathetically, "that the girls and others may have been taken off the wreck at the last. And there were other boats."

Ann shook her head. "Ours was the last," she replied. "And it was with my own eyes I saw Miss Patsy and Miss Carol on deck just before the

ship sank. There's no chance of their being alive, madam, and I hold it would be just cruel to pretend there was."

Tears stood in Sadie O'Manlon's bright eyes. She had been eager to welcome the new little daughter whose heart she had vowed to win. It seemed impossible to go back and tell her husband there was no hope. The severe Ann annoyed her, though the woman spoke for the best.

"I shall hope all the same," she said impulsively. "And one day I believe God will send those girls back"—and her smile warmed Mrs. Partlone's heart in a wonderful way.

"God bless you, my dear!" the latter whispered, and then, softer still, "How Patsy would have loved you!"

Lady O'Manlon did not reply, but she knew she and this brave old woman were going to be the best of friends. And now—well, she would be taking a message of hope, not despair, back to Patsy's father who had not dared to come down to the quay. Brave man as he was, he could not go and search in vain for his Patsy's bright face. He was standing at the foot of some marble steps amidst the glories of a tropical garden when his wife found him. She did not say one word—only

went forward and caught his two hands. But Sir Thomas knew; there was no need to ask his question.

Patsy would not be coming to greet the old dad she adored.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LEGEND OF GENTRA

JACK BARNLEY had done his bit. He had shown Carol and Patsy all the objects of interest on the island; they had explored the village, the shore, the cliffs, had practised with the revolvers, and were quite definite in declaring that the island of Mifano was a paradise on earth, that the Tarmenes were darlings, but that the sooner they were on their travels again the better pleased they would be.

Patsy tried to explain the feeling for her own benefit, but failed. The nearest approach to a right analysis was Carol's statement that there was some queer sort of bogy haunting these islands, a bogy with a rumbling voice which the natives called Gentra and she called fear.

Mrs. Lathways was the most content to remain where she and her husband had found a haven. Ronald Lathways was much better, and immediate danger had passed. In fact, the invalid

insisted on his wife leaving him and going for walks, though the walks seldom extended beyond the shore, and when Mrs. Barnley could not accompany her Carol was often Eva's companion, leaving Patsy to go scrambling about with Jack.

It was not more than a fortnight after the wreck when Jack and Patsy, wandering in search of a rare fruit for Ronald Lathways, came to the river bank, and Patsy, taking off shoes and stockings, began to paddle. Restless Jack, finding this too tame, went on the trail of a new cave of which Tifo had told him.

Patsy, left alone, fell to dreaming of dad and Castle Kerraford, of Marcote Court and jolly Tritons, till a faint rustling sound brought her round to peer into the undergrowth. There were plenty of savage foes in the forest, even if lions and tigers were unknown, but this was not one of them. Patsy, sitting quite rigid on her boulder, had a vision of a dark, broad face, weirdly decorated fuzzy hair, and a tattooed nose and chin; but the vision was a brief one; another instant and the face had vanished.

Curious and startled, Patsy slipped back off the bank and followed for a short distance. A native girl was down here somewhere—hiding or

possibly suffering; she wanted to see and ask her even if it were only in dumb show.

The girl, cornered by her friendly pursuer, had risen and stood defiant, almost threatening, her dark eyes challenging, one hand thrust into her native dress, whilst Patsy, seeing the unfriendly gesture, hesitated, but only for an instant, since a third actor had appeared on the scene. Down from a tree nearby dropped a brindled wild cat, its fur ruffled, its tawny eyes ablaze; it alighted on the native girl's shoulder and opened its attack with furious spittings and fierce clawing.

The terrified girl shrieked aloud and made a rush towards the river bank, whilst Patsy, snatching up a stout stick which lay near, followed. The animal's attack had clearly crazed the victim who would have pitched head foremost into the river, had not Patsy, swinging her stick, aimed a blow at the cat's head, which caused the creature to loose its hold and fall to the ground.

The native girl, gripping the bank, lowered herself more carefully now into the water, so that the cooling stream might soothe the pain of her scratches and she be in greater safety. Puss, finding her first foe gone, twisted herself round and like a fiery streak made a dash for Patsy who

avoided direct contact by dodging behind a tree. The cat was up the trunk in a twinkling, and, before Patsy could spring back, had all but alighted on her head; missing its objective by a hair's-breadth, the creature fell, but not before its talons had laid open the girl's wrist and forearm.

Dizzy with pain, Patsy reeled back, but Jack was tearing to the rescue, and a piece of rock, catching the enemy on the chest, sent her screeching into the thick of the undergrowth.

"Hurt?" asked Jack. "Hullo!" He had caught sight of the girl who dived and swam across the river, scrambled to the bank, and thrust her way through the bushes. "Wait a bit," cried the boy to Patsy. "I want to see where she goes. It was a Tarmari girl—and she won't be alone."

Patsy felt too faint to follow though she tried to stagger along the path, meeting Jack as he returned over the stepping-stones; the boy's face was very grave.

"There were three men with her," he said, "all Tarmari scouts—they are paddling back to Black Island for all they are worth. Come along, Patsy, and get that wrist bandaged; it must hurt furiously. What a brick you are! And Dad will have to know about the Tarmaris."

That was true, and both Carol and Patsy wondered at the cloud which the news cast over the missionary and his wife, though they said nothing to excite their visitors' fears, only giving a caution to the girls not to go out alone. How hot it was that evening too! In their little room Carol and Patsy felt baked. Sleep was impossible, and at last Patsy whispered a suggestion that they might dress and go out on to the verandah.

"I heard Mrs. Lathways moving about just now," she added. "I hope the Captain is not worse. Carol, do you know I believe there is going to be a storm?"

"The sooner the better," retorted Carol; "come out and we will listen to the voices of the night. I wonder what bird it is that makes the 'hoop—hoop—hoopa—a' noise."

Slipping on the dresses Mrs. Barnley had given them, they stepped out on to the verandah. How still everything was! Not a light showed anywhere; no native fires were burning as they had burned last night. The stillness was oppressive, and the glimmer of stars barely served to show the dark outline of trees.

"Have you got the creeps?" asked Patsy. "I have! Old Mary Anna used to call it the eighth

sense, but I don't know why it should tease me to-night. I suppose it is the mystery of the island. To-morrow we will stick to the shore and leave the forest alone. Why, Carol, what is that?"

A strange detonation, as though heavy guns were firing at some distance, broke through the hush and was echoed by a plaintive wailing from the native huts. Shivering with excitement, the girls stood on the verandah, clinging together whilst they saw over the trees a light growing brighter and brighter.

Boom! Boom! Those weird guns were thundering forth their warning again, and a few seconds later Mr. and Mrs. Barnley, followed by Jack, Micky, and two native servants, joined them on the verandah.

"It's the volcano," Jack said, coming across to his girl chums. "Not ours but the one on Black Island. If it goes on the natives will be over here, and there will be trouble. Listen to those villagers. And they say they don't believe in Gentra. Poor old Dad! I do believe Tifo and Malos are the only two who have outgrown superstitions."

Boom! Boom! How awesome it sounded! From where they stood they could see great rocks

hurtled into the air amidst red flames and grey smoke. Gentra was protesting violently. The natives remained in their huts, but their wailing continued till with dawn the detonations ceased and the flames died down. Mr. Barnley insisted now on all returning to bed for needed rest.

"Day will bring its own crisis," he said quietly; "we must rest—and pray."

Carol and Patsy stole back to their room. Had the cloud of depression passed, or did it still lurk in the background? A sound sleep helped to answer the question cheerfully. It was cooler when they awoke, and the natives, to Mr. Barnley's relief, had come out to work as usual, though only about half attended morning prayers.

"The others have gone to whisper in the Ear of Gentra. Tifo told me so," Jack confided to Patsy. "Dad is trying not to be disappointed, but it is difficult after six years' hard work. I'm off to have a look at Black Island through the telescope. I'll ask Dad if you two may come."

The consent obtained was reluctant, and Tifo and Micky joined the party as bodyguards. Mr. Barnley did not say he expected visitors from the sister isle, but he very obviously did so.

Micky had been busy helping in the house

and thoroughly enjoyed examining every tree and shrub, beetle and butterfly, as he went down the forest path to the shore. On the beach Patsy was soon absorbed in examining the wonderful shells and the strange life in the rock pools. She was busy planning how she could collect some of those fairy treasures when Carol and Jack came panting up.

"Four canoes have just landed from Black Island," said Carol, "but Jack says the men in them are Tarmene warriors who must have been over on a visit. They are quaint. Last week Jack says they were most devout Christians; now the best of them are restless and frightened. It is Gentra's wrath they fear, and Tifo has told Jack they want to make a sacrifice, only he won't say what it is."

"We'd better get back," said Jack; "we will go round by the shore. Hullo, look here, *oysters*! Let's take the Captain some."

It was good fun collecting the oysters, and in the enjoyment the young people forgot the threat of some mysterious peril, but later Eve Lathways mentioned it to Carol and Patsy, whilst she "rubbed in" a warning.

"There is just the possibility of all the natives

seeing red," said she, " though I doubt it being the least likely, but naturally Mr. Barnley is anxious. We have all been praying for a steamer to pass, and we must go on praying. If the volcano on Black Island remains quiet all may be well. There, don't look so white and worried! I'm a silly, nervy thing myself, but I have excuse, haven't I?"

How they hugged her! She was such a sweet little soul and so devoted to her big, kindly husband, nor were the girls ever likely to forget their goodness on the night of the wreck. How odd it was that that wreck was becoming quite ancient history to them now!

It is all very well to be cautioned, all very well to have panicky feelings, especially at night, but Carol and Patsy had a way of shaking such nerve stress off when the sun shone again. The weather after Mrs. Lathways spoke so seriously of a hidden threat was so normal and so fresh with pleasant breezes that all bogies were banished, and Mrs. Barnley gave smiling consent to the four—including Micky—having a picnic on the shore close by. Mrs. Barnley was a wonderful maker of cakes, and the fruit, specially picked, was superior to all other fruit—at least, so those four

said as they squatted round in a ring close by the fringe of wet sand and the white line of foam.

"Look at the shells," urged Patsy. "Did you ever see such darlints? Those long pink ones are like purses. I'm shure going to collect some as souvenirs of Mifano"—and away she went singing, followed by the others.

How blue the sea looked, and Patsy, hands on hips, stood, forgetful of shells, laughing at the evolutions of a shoal of porpoises. Then Micky pointed to the black fin of a shark, and the four retreated, glad to turn away from an enemy which set them all shuddering.

"Look," said Carol, pointing towards a barrel which lay amongst the rocks, "what is that? It must be wreckage."

The boys set off in a race for the "treasure" and were both hammering away before the girls arrived. Peals of laughter rang out over the shore at the discovery of butter—real Irish butter into which Micky thrust a greedy finger and was chased in punishment by Jack to the edge of the forest.

Here indeed was a prize which Mrs. Barnley would gladly welcome, though the rolling of the barrel over sands and rocks was no light task. A

special tea, specially served on the verandah, was the reward, and in the glamour of an early twilight Mrs. Barnley sat with the young folk squatting around to tell them the legend of the Fire King's daughter Gentra, who was supposed now to be imprisoned within the volcano over on Black Island.

A quaint little legend it was, of how the Fire King's fairest daughter reached Earth from her father's Kingdom of the Sun by way of a falling star and, tired by so precipitous a journey, fell asleep in the forest on Black Island. Awakening lonely, she wandered on till she reached the home of the Fairy of the Island who asked for all that was good for her island kingdom. Recognizing Gentra, she invited her into her cave and feasted her royally; then, sending for the son of the island chief, she told him in wooing Gentra he would bring prosperity to his kingdom. The Prince obeyed, but, though Gentra soon loved him devotedly, it was the fairy guardian of the island the Prince learned to adore, and his love was returned.

Now it was a case of clever wits at strife. Gentra, the Fire King's daughter, wove her plots to destroy the fairy Wanola, and the fairy

retaliated by weaving hers. At touch of the magic wand the mountain in the centre of the island gaped apart, and Gentra, passing, was curious to see what had chanced. As she entered, the mountain immediately closed, but Gentra, thrusting up her wand, made the opening which formed the crater, and henceforth there she lived, alternately soothed by her maidens, and in sudden gusty rages flinging up the fires of destruction till more maidens were sent to her.

Always, the legend said, Gentra would burst out in these furies till the fairy Wanola was bound and brought to her for vengeance, but the fairy and her Prince had lived and laughed and so passed out into the sunset like all good Tarmari people, without feeling the vengeance of Gentra which still threatens their land.

"It's shure as pretty as an Irish fairy story," declared Patsy, "and do the natives still believe it?"

"Rather," chirped Jack. "I dare say they think you may be Wanola, Patsy—you or Carol, because you—er—look different"—a back-handed compliment which set them all laughing.

There were no clouds on the horizon that night in the house of the white missionary, though, in

the quaint beehive homes near, strange ceremonies were being performed since news had come that Gentra still whispered her threats in the secret cave of the mountain.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE TRAP

"I DON'T know," said Jack as he met the girls coming back from a visit to the village school which was Mrs. Barnley's hobby, "but from what Tifo and Malos say the Tarmaris are getting the wind up again, and Dad has told me to take Tifo after dinner to watch from the red cliffs in case they try invasion!"

It was disappointing to Carol and Patsy not to be allowed to join the watch, but Mr. Barnley was quite emphatic.

"Stay indoors or on the verandah," he advised: "it is going to be a very hot day, and you are better at home."

Ronald Lathways was not well, and his wife retired for the afternoon into his room. Jack and Tifo went off to the cliffs, and Mr. Barnley also went his way on business, leaving his wife to conduct a meeting of converts alone. Carol and Patsy lay in long chairs on the verandah, with

books in their hands and long glasses of fruit syrup by their sides.

"Shure, luxury," said Patsy. "I wish I felt lazy, but I don't. That's our contrariness. If we had to go adventuring we should feel dead sleepy."

"If I read I shall get sleepy all right," replied Carol. "Oh, Patsy girl, when is that steamer coming along? I wonder if our people know about the *Carisbrooke* and if they believe we are drowned. I can't bear to think it."

"Shure don't think it then," retorted Patsy; "it's quite likely none of our friends know yet excepting those in England who have heard about the wreck. Dad won't have heard, I fancy —that's good. What worries me tremendously is Tante. She was such a jewel of a fairy godmother and so brave, the darlint! I do hope that she got to land, but I don't know what land the boats would be making for."

"More likely they would be picked up by other vessels," replied Carol, "but it's all speculation, for we must have been blown hundreds of miles out of our way."

"Mrs. Darlane will have heard," said Patsy, "and the girls—most of them. Agatha and Co. will be weeping for us—with salt, salt tears over

our watery grave. That makes me feel a humbug. But we'll reward them with a tale of adventure. Can't you see their eyes just starting out of their heads? We'll do no lessons next term, Carol. Think of fractions and geography, or French verbs, after volcanoes and fuzzy-headed natives."

Carol had to laugh, Patsy was so irrepressible.

"I'm not sure that I don't prefer Devonshire and Marcote Court to Mifano," she replied, "though my present mood is blissful. If only we knew a steamer was calling to-morrow I should say shipwrecks and adventures were almost as nice as they are in books—only I'd want to be sure none of the people on the *Carisbrooke* were drowned."

Patsy sat up. "I don't want to think of the *Carisbrooke,*" she said shortly. "I really get depressed. I would never be a sailor if I were a man. Hullo, Carol mine, here come two of the Tarmenes in a hurry! News—what news? I simply won't listen if it is bad news. I can't be thrilled by it. I—I——"

"Hush," replied Carol sternly, for Patsy was very nearly hysterical, "they are two of Mr. Barnley's special friends, and if there is panic we must help them."

The men had already reached the verandah and stood at the bottom of the steps panting. As Carol leaned over the rail towards them the bigger of the two stepped forward.

"Jack!" he said. "The white teacher's son; he accident—much hurt—send queek."

*Jack hurt!* Carol gave a little cry of distress whilst Patsy caught her arm.

"We must go at once," she said. "Oh, poor Mrs. Barnley! We must go; you're so splendid at first aid, Carol. Shall I tell Mrs. Lathways? She would give us bandages or come herself."

"There are plenty of those and everything in the medicine cupboard," said Carol. "Come and help me to fetch them."

The natives cried inarticulately after them as they hurried away, but, if they thought the white girls were deaf to their petition, they soon found their mistake when the latter reappeared with a bag of necessaries. With never a thought but for Jack's need Carol and Patsy accompanied their guides. They had seen the latter in close attendance on Mr. Barnley at the services in the church-hut and not for a second doubted the truth of their story.

Along the forest path they hurried, close on the

heels of their guides; the sun still shone, for there was scarcely any twilight here, and it was still early. Only once did faint uneasiness stir their pulses as the men halted, whispering as though in consultation before turning sharply to the left. To their surprise the girls saw before them a part of the shore they did not recognize. Trees grew almost to the water's edge, and from where they stood they could see the mountain peak on Black Island. Yes, and down there close to the water's edge lay three canoes drawn under the shelter of rocks—three canoes, native canoes, with a little group of three men near them; dark-skinned, fierce-looking men, wearing strange head-dresses and attire. They were not the men of the Mission, and unlike any the girls had seen, and, as the strangers came leaping and racing up towards them, they realized their danger.

The story of Jack's accident had been a trap, and these were men of the Tarmari tribe come to carry the white servants of Gentra to their doom!

Natural instinct called for flight, and the girls had swung round in an instant and made a dash for the forest. They were fleet runners, both celebrated in the playing fields at Marcote Court,

and they were racing for their lives. Their flight had been so headlong that the traitor Tarmene warriors had not time to seize them, though they sent their spears hurtling after them. Untouched, both Carol and Patsy dashed along the forest path, but fleet-footed as they were they were no match for those who came like sleuth-hounds in pursuit.

Patsy was the first to be seized and held fast till the second of the natives brought Carol back. Prisoners both, but so far unbound and ungagged! Yet they did not struggle or cry out. Jack had told them how courage was prized by the natives, and they both resolved to show that white girls were no cowards.

But it was not easy to be so brave when the shore was reached again, and there lay the canoes, black and taut, in the sunset. Soon it would be dark.

Carol gave a little gasp as she sprang forward, wrenching herself free. If she could reach that spur of land and round it she guessed she would come in view of Jack's post, and, for two minutes, it looked as if she would win a race which brought hope. But no! Patsy, still helpless in a strong grip, saw the sleuth-like figures bound forward

and overtake the girl just as she reached that screen spur.

The race was lost, and, seeing the hopelessness of their position, the prisoners stood motionless in the grip of the natives who, having dragged the canoes quickly to the water's edge, sprang in, with the girls still prisoners beside them: then, catching up their paddles, the Tarmari warriors set out for a triumphant return.

Gentra would no longer rage unsatisfied. Behold, the white girls were here for sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XVI

### GENTRA'S MAIDENS

PRISONERS! Dazed and despairing, Carol and Patsy looked around. Their captors had hustled them out of the canoes and driven them forward up the beach towards the entrance of a rocky valley. As they looked, the girls realized there was some meaning in the name of Black Island which was very different from the sister isle of Mifano. Here, high cliffs yawned with a deep valley between, a valley of rushing streams, grey crags, and mighty boulders—a long grim avenue with the rugged heights of the volcano standing at the head of the gap like some black stronghold owned by a tyrant.

From the crater issued a volume of smoke which drifted out and away over the sea, the whole forming a threatening picture. Nearer the coast were groups of trees and the huts of the natives forming a semi-circle beyond the valley. Men and women were to be seen moving to and fro,

with the slow steps of those who grow weary after the strain of a great fear. No doubt for the last two nights the Tarmari natives had been kept wakeful by the raging of the volcano. All was desolate—on this side at least—though it was probable that there was tropical vegetation and rice fields beyond those screening cliffs. The natives were darker skinned and coarser featured than their near neighbours, which was surprising. Their nature too seemed to be more turbulent, possibly more cruel. Here, under the watchful eye of Gentra, they must obey their goddess's claim, and, alas, listen to her priests!

Patsy was the first to spy the little group which surrounded the witch doctor of the tribe who in this case was also chief, obtaining office and authority from the fact that he had spent twenty-four hours in the house of Gentra.

Neither Patsy nor Carol understood anything of their peril excepting that it was there. "Be prepared" is a motto for others than Guides, and those two had braced themselves to be prepared for anything. The first chapter was bad enough, but this last made both shiver in a growing fear.

The captors of "Gentra's maidens" were not slow in relinquishing their charge as soon as

the officials of the tribe appeared, and the girls watched the latter drawing near, their hearts sinking. The weird scene impressed itself upon their minds: the volcano, with the red flames and smoke rushing up from the crater; the ominous rumbling which was followed every now and then by the trembling of the ground; the view of a long ridge of cliffs, crag, and boulders, all struck a chill, grim note which was strengthened by the appearance of a little group of natives led by a grotesquely habited figure in which it was easy to recognize the leader in his combined office of priest and chief. Hideously bedizened, loaded with necklaces of shells and the teeth and small tusks of animals, Dindrone, the chief of the Tarmaris, prided himself on being an awe-inspiring personality. Holding his short, thick spear over his head, he advanced, followed by eight attendants who circled about the prisoners, whilst their chief, his spear still aloft, stood half facing the girls, half facing the volcano, whilst his voice rose in a wild chant.

On and on he sang, then, with a yell rather than cry, rushed towards a flat rock and began dancing in fantastic fashion till he fell at last exhausted. Tarmari natives had begun to throng

around, the men foremost, the women in the rear. Was this going to be some sacrificial ceremony? thought Carol and Patsy, cold in terror. Or was it merely an invocation? Whatever it might be they could not escape, and it was best to remain standing here waiting for what was to follow.

Patsy felt a sudden irresistible longing to laugh. Her lips twitched, her dimples came and went, she could have screamed, but she did not, and gradually the fatal merriment left her. Once again she was serious, seeing things as they were, though she asked herself—would the hour ever dawn when she could tell the jolly Tritons of this adventure and picture the comic cut of old Chief Fuzzy, the shrill squeal of his voice, the brandishing of his weapon, the gaping wonder of the Tarmaris, and the red and black horror of the volcano?

Dindrone had risen from the stone on which he had collapsed and beckoned his warriors to gather about him. Evidently the plans of the leaders were not yet mature, and there was to be a hurried council whilst the girls standing amongst a group of men and women waited to learn their fate.

Gentra still grumbled, but it seemed as though the threat of a serious eruption was over, and the natives were ready to return to their occupations. Several canoes were already launched, and their owners paddling out to their fishing. But the majority waited—as the usual crowd will wait—to learn what their rulers intended to do with these stranger maids. White people could have been no novelty amongst the islanders, though curious glances were directed towards the girls whose slender beauty no doubt attracted admiration.

At last the conclave was over. The chief rose and beckoned the crowd to form into procession, and the whole faced towards the cliff wall on the left side of the valley. Here, amongst the crags and rocks, Patsy spied the arched entrance to a cave. Catching hold of Carol's hand, she squeezed it hard.

"I'm shure glad it's not to the mountain," she whispered—and Carol nodded. That fear had been at the hearts of both.

The crowd which formed the procession pressed as closely as they dared about the prisoners whom they regarded with the friendliest eyes, several of the women bringing flowers and fruit which

they offered to them. Evidently the girls were regarded as the sacrifice which would appease the wrath of their demon goddess, and till they were actually given to Gentra their treatment seemed likely to be kind.

It was dark within the cave, and torches of scented wood were lighted as the procession entered. It was stiflingly close, and Patsy, listening, fancied she could hear the thunder of falling water somewhere below their feet. A smaller cave was reached by a narrow opening, and into this cave only about a dozen of the Tarmaris were admitted. The ground here sloped sharply, and Patsy, peering forward, noticed that the chief and his companions halted, where two white rocks stood side by side.

Slowly the girls advanced, and as they reached the group of natives the latter parted showing a narrow plank stretched over a rocky abyss. The gleam of torches gave the gazers some idea of those terrible depths from which rose the roar of a subterranean cataract. As far as they could see an opening into another cave lay beyond the chasm.

There was no mistaking the chief's gesture—one

by one the girls were to pass across the bridge into the prison cave beyond.

Was it possible to flee back and escape? Death stood at the entrance so dimly seen. There would be no returning this way. And yet this could surely not be the home of Gentra to which they were destined? Here lay their hope. It was almost certain that this was only a prison where they would await the final surrender of their lives to the island goddess.

Carol led the way, her head erect, her steps stately. Patsy, her hands clasped, stood on the edge of the chasm thrilled with admiration. Sure, Carol might have been a queen going to her throne. The example robbed the younger girl of all fear, and in her impetuous way she nearly slipped by hurrying forward. The unwary step gave her a scare, and she followed Carol with more caution but certainly with less dignity.

Safe! A sob of relief broke from Carol as she caught Patsy's hand, and the two paused looking back, curious to see whether they were being followed. And then, oh, what a moment of panic it was as Dindrone, the chief, raised his curved knife and the next instant the frail bridge crashed

down into the abyss! They would not pass that way again.

"Steady, Patsy," urged Carol, "here we are, and there will be plenty to scheme for our freedom. See, there is light here, and—why, we must have been expected."

They had turned back into this third cave and were surprised to find light streaming down from an opening hundreds of feet overhead. A flame burned too in a large shell which must have contained some sort of oil, and the light revealed a circular cave with a quantity of freshly cut flowers strewing the floor, a jar of water, a bowl of fruit, and a flat basket filled with dried fish and cakes. Skins of animals formed a couch, and care had been taken to make the cave as habitable as possible.

And the girls were hungry, oh, there was no doubt as to that, hungry and thirsty too! Laughing in the reaction from deadly fear, they swooped upon those cakes and fruit.

"They are not starving us," said Patsy. "And of course, Carol, all adventures end happily, so—we shall find a way out."

"I'm not going to think of Gentra," said Carol presently. "Of course the Tarmaris will be

making her a present of us, but we shall have to escape first. The Barnleys will be thinking it out —they know the people they have to deal with. But the mice inside the trap can help. We had better leave the rest of our supplies and explore. Isn't this a priceless place?"

"If only I had a camera," sighed Patsy, "to show Dad our prison—and the girls! Mrs. Darlane will never get any lessons done for the first week of term. We will give a lecture on desert islanders and their habits. Won't it be perfectly lovely? This chapter shall be headed 'The condemned cell'—flowers strewing the floor, a feast of good things, and the mysterious door. We had better bustle and find that door now, hadn't we? I wish I had a gimlet and a few tools."

"No use at all, you foolish child," retorted Carol; "if there is a door or an exit—which there must be—it won't be the sort to be opened by tools. We shall have to think of all the likeliest 'open sesames' if we want to escape."

Very slowly and with growing anxiety the searchers moved round the walls. Yes, no doubt the secret lay there, but they could not find it—a secret which if they knew it might open the way to escape.

"I don't want the 'trapped' feeling to grow," said Patsy plaintively. "I keep on saying 'happy ending,' and I—I expect I shall believe it right in my bones soon. Come here, Carol, and tell me if these two little rocks could ever make a door handle to swing back the long flat slab."

Carol came and long they puzzled over this likeliest "door." But bruised fingers and broken nails were the only result. It was desperate work and became more desperate as the girls grew convinced that this was the way out if only they had the key to the riddle. Vainly Patsy struck both little fists against the smooth black slab.

"Open—open!" she urged. "Carol, I shall scream. For supposing we can't find the secret and have to wait till King Fuzzy-hair opens it."

"Well, we shall have got to the second chapter, that is all," replied Carol cheerfully. "So don't worry. Have some more fruit; it is ever so nice, and I believe afterwards I shall go to sleep."

"Never," whispered Patsy, "you never can."

But Carol only laughed as she pulled her chum down on to the pile of skins.

"Sleep is what we need—badly," she said, "or we shall turn into a couple of jumping Jennies

instead of British schoolgirls. Keep the flag flying, Patsy, and so close your eyes. We are going to sleep!"

And, what is more, Carol was right.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A RESCUE

CRASH! No, it wasn't crash, and it wasn't boom or crack—in fact, it was a startling noise unlike anything the two who sprang up into wakefulness had ever heard.

Patsy was the first on her feet. The oil had burned out in the shell, and it was moonlight which came flooding down from far overhead. Moonbeams filled the mystery cave and showed the prisoners a tangle of flowers raised from the rocky floor and tumbling back into two piles whilst the floor over which they had been strewn was behaving in the strangest way. This time it really was a crash with which that rocky slab fell back, and a ghostly figure in a white linen jacket rose up from below.

Not very ghostly either, for the sun-tanned hands which gripped the sides of that hole were real enough and strong enough. Patsy had all she could do not to fling her arms round their

owner even before he had sprung up beside her on to the floor of the cave. It was Cecil Barnley, though the girls were too astounded to cry his name or even give a word of welcome. Tears filled their eyes; they were trembling with the joy of hope, breathless with excitement not untouched by fear.

Then Patsy's dimples flashed as, after Tifo had followed his master up from below, the red head of Micky Brunt appeared. And Micky was in a hurry—as he always was—and toppled clean over on arrival, landing at Patsy's feet. But, with black danger encircling them, there was no time for words. The crash of stone on stone had been bad enough, and who knew that secret guardians might not have heard it?

The missionary caught Carol's hands, whilst Patsy flung one arm round Micky's neck and beamed gratitude on Tifo. It was a tense moment. Then Barnley said softly, "Thank God."

Tifo was looking round the cave. He must have known what those flowers and fruit meant, possibly he had heard the legend of those secret sacrifices to Gentra, but his Christianity was too strong to be daunted by fear. Flowers? Yes,

flowers for Gentra's maidens, but they were the flowers of Death.

Micky had slipped from Patsy's hug and gone to fill his pockets with cakes and fruit. Of course he was hungry in spite of the enormous supper with which he had fortified himself for adventure. And, whilst Micky laid in stores, Tifo led the way back down the secret way, hinting dumbly that the atmosphere of the prison cave was distinctly unhealthy. Mr. Barnley took the hint immediately.

"Follow with Micky, Patsy," said he, smiling. "I fancy he wished to make your rescue his personal affair and—why, I couldn't refuse him."

Patsy obeyed. Carol was to have gone next, but a sudden cry from Tifo made Mr. Barnley step forward, and as he swung down to discover what was wrong the flat slab of rock which the girls had been so busy inspecting on the opposite wall of the cave slipped noiselessly back, and in the cavity stood Dindrone, the Tarmari chief, holding a native lamp in his hand.

It was a terrible moment for Carol who stood alone in the cave, the opening in the floor gaping at her feet. Dindrone had taken in the situation instantly, and raised his left hand with a short, thick spear ready to fling should Carol attempt

to follow her companions. But Carol made no such effort. Stooping swiftly, she pushed the overturned rock so that it rolled back into its socket in the floor. For the time at least the fugitives were safe, being warned of danger in their rear.

A cry of rage broke from the Tarmari chief's lips as too late he sprang to arrest the white girl's action. But Carol was at the other's mercy and guessed small mercy would be shown; and yet as she stood erect she was smiling as she had smiled in stepping on to the bridge across the chasm, and the grizzled chief, seeing that smile and the steady gaze of those grey eyes, let his clenched fist fall to his side.

No doubt, he thought, this was a white queen from that distant shore—a maiden who would please Gentra a hundred times better than the maids of the tribe—and so she should not die in punishment for her defiance; she should remain in a still more secret hiding-place till the hour of the great festival. As to the others, they would return in search of their queen and be offered as slaves with her to the great goddess.

Carol stood motionless whilst Dindrone stood making swift plans. She felt her position was

hopeless, and the loneliness of it made it harder to bear. She was roused by the harsh sound of the chief's voice, and allowed her captor to drive her before him through the opening and up steps which must have been hewn out of the rock—up, up, till they stepped out into the moonlight. It was amazing to find that they were now on the top of the cliff, with the volcano, which must have been a couple of miles away, facing them. It was night, and all was silent, except for the harsh cry of a vulture as it circled round above a dead prey.

They could not see the island of Mifano from here, but the sea lay calm as a mill pond at their feet. Was Gentra already appeased by the knowledge of a sacrifice soon to be offered? Dindrone beckoned the girl to move forward amongst the crags, climbing, descending, and climbing again till they were considerably nearer to the volcano. Above them towered a mass of rock, and Dindrone, leading now, found the secret of that apparently solid block.

Here was a second prison, and a deeper one than the last. Within the rock they found a stair which led down, down, down, till Carol, tired and giddy, wondered if ever they would reach the bottom. And, when at last the bottom was

reached, what was the solitary English girl to find? Nothing but a deep pool, mysterious and black, with a narrow ledge along which to pass to and fro. There was no sign of food.

As Carol looked round a cry rose to her lips but did not pass them. She was alone. Even Dindrone had vanished. With all her soul she prayed, prayed for deliverance from evil. And the far away moonlight fading from the sky left her—alone but still praying in the darkness.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE ESCAPE

It was not till the bottom of that secret stair was reached that Patsy made the discovery Carol was not with them, and it was with the utmost difficulty that her rescuers prevented her return in search of her chum. Mr. Barnley had a difficult task indeed. Patsy had remounted several of the steps before he could detain her, and then, pushing his hand away, she turned to rage at him like any wild cat.

"Shure, are you a man at all, at all," she cried, "to leave the sweet darlint to be murdered on her lonesome? Oh, tell me, tell me what has happened? It's mad I shall go entirely."

"Be sensible, Patsy," said Cecil Barnley sternly. "You have neither right nor reason to talk so. Tifo called me as he fancied he had seen a native scrambling down the steps before us and believed we were likely to be ambushed. I took the lead instantly, as you know, but I think

Tifo was mistaken. Hardly had I taken the lead than I heard a crash and believed that Carol had found some way of closing the opening above us. Only now I have learned she is missing, and there can be but one reason for it. She was arrested —someone entered the cave, and in thought for us the brave girl closed the secret entrance."

Patsy began to sob. "Brave! The darlint! She's a heroine. And I love her. I'll not go without her. It's kind of you all to come, but I won't leave Carol."

"It is impossible to return," said Barnley. "If our enemies are in the cave above it simply means we return to be murdered. It is impossible."

"Shure," rapped out Patsy, "that's right enough! You've got your wife and—and Jack, but it is my friend."

Tears choked her, and there was a pause—a horrible pause, it seemed to her. Then Tifo began to speak in his own language. Patsy guessed it was something urgent he had to say, and Mr. Barnley translated it quickly.

"Patsy," he said, "it's bitter hard to say, but if you insist on returning you doom us all; and, if we delay ten minutes longer, the tide will be too low to take our boat into deep water. Tifo

says the priests of Gentra must have seized Carol."

Patsy's head drooped. It was the hardest thing she had ever had to do—the hardest thing she felt she could ever be called to do—this escaping into safety and leaving behind her the friend who had saved her life.

It was a silent party which hurried down the many passages which wound in and out—strange, broken passages with rocks and stones lying about in confusion—and as they advanced, the roaring of that subterranean cataract sounded nearer and nearer.

Patsy's arm was held by Micky Brunt who had constituted himself his lady's guardian, and it was Micky who drew the dazed girl back against the wall when Barnley called a halt. The missionary had drawn out his powerful torch and held it high, revealing the fact that they were standing on a rocky platform above the cataract. Patsy could see the foaming waters as they rushed by, and as she leaned forward she saw the steps cut in the rocky wall which rose up from the riverside.

A boat—not a native canoe, but a long, slender boat capable of holding some six or eight people —was moored to an iron ring in the rock wall.

Only the previous day Jack Barnley had shown a similar boat to the girls, explaining that these were the warrior boats of the Tarmenes in which they went to battle or on any exploration such as was sometimes necessary.

Such a boat might survive the desperate leap over the cataract, though Patsy wondered how the travellers had been able to come. Possibly there was some circuitous route. At any rate she was being told by dumb show to climb down those steps into the boat where Tifo already stood. It was no easy task, but Patsy realized none could help her, and it must be attempted, though half of her longed to go back—back to die with Carol.

Once she was launched, however, on the face of the rock, her fighting spirit was aroused, and she clambered like a cat, with a swift memory of how she had climbed the wall at Castle Kerraford to the rescue of a wee kitten. This was a sterner job, and her leap into the boat was precipitate.

There was no one left behind this time, Cecil Barnley being the last to climb down. Patsy watched him with some remorse. She had had no right to speak as though this quiet hero were a coward—she had been unjust to a man who had had to count a possible cost when he came

to the rescue of two girls. Patsy's lips quivered, and as the missionary took his place beside her she slipped her hand impulsively into his.

"I was shure cruel," she said; "forgive me—oh, do forgive me!"

He could not hear the words with the thunder of the waterfall drowning all lesser sounds, but he understood her gesture and smiled down at her. Tifo and Micky had seized their paddles, and Patsy, thinking she had a part to play too, took hers and dipped it into the rushing tide. But a paddle was sure the most hopeless thing to use in an emergency, for it was bound to go wrong. Patsy's was promptly carried away in that brown swirl of waters; she was blaming herself as the broken reed which brought disaster on comrades when she spied Micky's paddle following her own down-stream. The next moment she was caught by Cecil Barnley and dragged down to the bottom of the craft which, swung about like a leaf in a maelstrom, was gripped by the current, and the next moment was racing like a mad thing on—on—and then downwards over the brink of the cataract.

Patsy had once said she adored noise! She had vowed no thunder or tempest, no crashing,

smashing or hubbub could ever deafen her, but she had never before experienced the sensation of being swept down a rocky chasm with the uproar of falling waters as they seethed, churned, bubbled, and roared down into the darkness. Patsy was excited, thrilled, but wholly deafened. She could not think. Her feeling was of being hit on the head by a hammer so that something in her ears swelled and burst. The thunder took a definite chant—Carol! Carol! Carol! One thought in the blank stormed at her heart. She wanted nothing in the world but Carol, and she was falling into space without her.

After that, confusion and noise drifted into a deep oblivion from which she awoke to find she was in a boat on the open sea, whilst Tifo and Micky and someone she could not see were paddling furiously in the direction of a white line of shore. And the only thing that worried her was the conviction that Micky had lost his paddle, and it was not fair he should have borrowed another.

There were people on the white beach; someone cried out, and then high on a curling wave rode the warrior boat till she could feel the keel grip the sand, and strong arms lifted her up and

carried her out of the boat and up over the sand.

What people were saying Patsy did not know. She lay quite still in Cecil Barnley's arms and made no movement when he laid her gently down on the long wicker chair in the verandah. Then someone brought a cup with milk and brandy in it and made her drink it, after which the stiff, frozen feeling passed, and she sat up to find Eva Lathways and Mrs. Barnley beside her.

"Oh!" cried Patsy, bursting into tears. "Can't anyone save Carol? *Can't* they save her?"

Eva Lathways stooped to kiss the hot forehead.

"My dear," she replied, "God can show us the way to save her. If it is possible, Carol will be given back to us. I believe it."

Those last three words brought comfort when Patsy most needed it. One cannot, however, go through such experiences without paying a price, and next morning Patsy awoke shivering and yet burning in a low fever. It was no use protesting that she was quite well, no use to declare she intended to set out at once for Black Island. When she tried to stand Patsy collapsed in the most hopeless defeat and had to submit to being put back to bed where for two days she remained

tossing to and fro and talking sheer nonsense. Then she began to get better and became so perplexed at not seeing Mrs. Barnley that at last Eva Lathways had to confess the truth.

"Lena was afraid you would ask questions," she said. "As a matter of fact her husband went back in search of Carol, taking Roger and Donald with him, but they were attacked by the natives and barely escaped with their lives. Mr. Barnley was hurt rather severely, and his wife is nursing him. They are worried too over their own flock. The activity of the volcano has excited the natives, and most of the Christian converts are likely to return to their old allegiance. They are afraid of Gentra even if they don't believe in her. The only two trustworthy men are Tifo and Malos, and they declare nothing can be done."

"Do you think," asked Patsy in despair, "that Carol is dead?"

Mrs. Lathways shook her head. "No," she said decidedly. "Tifo thinks it is certain they will wait for the festival day which will not be here for two or three weeks. Of course if another eruption took place between now and then they might alter arrangements, but Tifo has secret information, though he won't tell the source."

Two or three weeks! And during that time Carol would be hidden in some secret prison. Patsy, pale, thin, and depressed, looked like a ghost of her merry self when she came downstairs. She dared not mention Carol's name, for Mrs. Barnley told her nothing, simply that nothing could be done and that it was cruel to hint to Mr. Barnley that an effort to rescue the poor little prisoner should be made.

"He did all—*all* that was possible," said the missionary's wife, "and no more can be done."

So Patsy said nothing but crept about wan and weary-eyed, haunted always by the one thought. And of all sympathizers none were more ardent than Jack and Micky. Micky was the first to voice his feelings.

"You tell me what to do, Miss Patsy," he urged, "and I'll put my head into the whale's mouth if it will help the other colleen."

"If only there were a mouse-hole of hope," added Jack, as the three crossed the open space in front of the verandah one morning, "but there isn't. A steamer might pass or a Navy ship might come along, and settle the Tarmaris, but nothing else will do the trick. If it could, Dad would be there. He's breaking his heart over Carol, and

so is Captain Lathways, Mother told me so. Let's have a grand conclave and get scheming."

They sat under a coconut palm to wrestle with the problem but got no whit nearer a common-sense plan of rescue. Patsy, to be sure, had not too much common-sense, and one plan after another was discussed and set aside. It was Jack who brought out at last from his pocket three or four small packets.

"I unearthed these this morning," he said. "Bengal lights, two red and two green. When we first came here we wanted to have a grand show, and Dad brought fireworks. We lit two of the Bengal lights and set them under one of the shrubs close to the village in the forest. Coo! You should have seen what happened. I was only a kidlet, but even I remember. The natives stood stock-still for a minute; then, as the red and green glow spread, they simply gave tongue and fled for their lives, yelling that the spirits were going to destroy them. Dad stamped out the lights and chucked away most of the fireworks, but it took months to satisfy the people that there was not black magic under Dad's hands. He, of course, promised no more demons should come along, and he put these lights right away. But

I collected them so that we could think out some way of getting the Tarmaris properly panic-stricken."

Patsy thrilled. For the first time since Carol's loss hope revived.

"We must act at once," she said; "give me two of the Bengal lights, a red and a green one. If I could only reach Carol's prison—we—might——"

"Both be killed together," said Jack promptly. "No, my advice is—wait. Carol won't be in danger till the end of the week. We will have to think furiously and act desperately. Of course we shall get Carol as a reward. *I* believe it."

And, though his confidence was not founded on any brilliant suggestion of how that rescue could be carried out, it brought the smiles back to Patsy's face.

## CHAPTER XIX

### PATSY PLAYS A LONE HAND

WOULD a steamer never come to take the shipwrecked travellers away from the lonely island of Mifano? Mrs. Lathways pathetically asked the question as she and Mrs. Barnley paced up and down on the shore.

"Ronald is so much better," added the little wife. "And he feels as I do. That dreadful volcano just haunts us, and the thought of poor Carol's fate never leaves our minds. We can't do anything, but Patsy's eyes reproach me every time I see her."

"Patsy O'Manlon is unreasonable," declared Mrs. Barnley. "Cecil has done all a man can do. He has been having a very hard time lately and when the next vessel touches at the island I shall send a message to his Society asking for a change. He is working against one of the hardest stumbling blocks to Christianity—super-

stition. The natives have been bred in it, and it is hard to kill."

Mrs. Lathways said nothing. She was deeply sorry for Lena Barnley, and felt in her place she should have wished the same—to leave that sinking ship. But Cecil Barnley himself was not the man to yield to despair because of failure, and gradually as the days passed and no further disturbance took place life became more normal.

But still Patsy was waiting for the grand scheme of rescue. About eight days after Carol's self-sacrifice Mr. Barnley came on to the verandah in a disturbed state of mind.

"Tifo has been speaking of the festival of Gentra," he said to his wife; "it will take place on Saturday. I simply cannot remain here and let that poor girl be murdered in cold blood."

Mrs. Barnley paled. "If there were a way I would not hold you back," Patsy heard her reply, "but there is no way."

"I will wait till Friday," said Mr. Barnley; "then I shall go to Black Island."

His wife did not reply, but Patsy noticed the tears rolling down her cheeks after her husband left her. Friday and to-day was Wednesday! It was time for Patsy to act.

She had the first chapter planned as she walked along the forest path that morning. She had already spoken to Micky.

"Watch out, Mike," she commanded. "And don't forget to keep Bengal lights in your pockets. They may be of extraordinary value."

The next morning the others all noticed the cheeriness of her mood, joking and chatting till even Jack wondered. It was odd for Patsy to start joking when her chum lay in the shadow of death. After breakfast Patsy went in search of Micky and found him climbing after coconuts.

"Come down," she ordered, "and listen to me. I am going to rescue Carol. There *is* a way, and I have found it. If you hear I am missing, tell Mr. Barnley where I have gone."

Micky went red, then white.

"Sure, I'm coming," said he.

Patsy hesitated. "No," she replied, "stay here till I send. I just leave it to Mr. Barnley and all my friends. Tell them not to chuck their lives away. *I'm* not! I'm the Irish cat with ten lives. So long."

She left Micky with his mouth wide open and went off down to the shore. She had an idea there would be a canoe safely tucked away

amongst the reeds, and she was right. A canoe —and she could paddle. As to sharks, she must risk them.

But Patsy herself was surprised to find how dreary a feeling it was to go on a lone trail. As she stood there, shading her eyes as she looked towards Black Island, her courage failed her. A curious panic swept over her. She was not a girl to fear bogies, but as she looked at that smoking crater it seemed as if the shadow of the evil goddess hovered bat-like over it.

It was a wonderful moment when she turned round and saw—Micky. Honestly, she could have hugged him. The lad looked half defiant, half pleading, and forestalled any dismissal.

"I'm coming," he said, "even if it's swim I have to amongst the black sharkses. I've got the firelights too, and you are captain. Only I'm coming."

"You terror!" retorted Patsy. "Jack will half slay you for leaving him out of it. But—I think I won't say 'no' at all. Wait a bit, Micky. We ought not to go off without a word, and I see Donald and Roger down there by the river. I'll scribble a note for Mr. Barnley, and they can take it—tell them there's no hurry. Then we'll start."

Micky beamed. He seemed to regard this invitation to come along and be murdered as a great honour, and, as soon as the note was scribbled, away he went with it, leaving Patsy in a ferment for fear someone or something stopped her. She had no very clear plan—only a vague possibility which must be shaped by circumstance. One very definite point was plain: Carol could not be left to those savages.

Micky was no laggard, and his beaming face told of success. The sailors had been thrilling over the capture of some large fish and were quite relieved to hear that there was no hurry over the delivery of the note. Those two were most matter-of-fact individuals and took each day as it came—as long as there was plenty to eat, amusement, and no claim on their very slow intelligence to lead an enterprise. If they were wanted they were there. If they were not wanted they took the day with its good things and enjoyed them. Also, they hardly believed in Carol's danger and preserved a confidence that their leader would call on them if the danger became acute.

Micky, on edge with excitement, and with more thought for adventure than peril, was already in

the canoe, his small pert face radiant as he gripped the paddle. Young as he was, Patsy felt it made all the difference in the world to have a comrade, though—well, she could not have asked Jack to come, though she knew how sad he would be at their desertion.

The tall cliffs stood like a wall before them; the shore seemed empty. They were approaching the island further to the left so as to land beyond the ridge of cliffs and be protected by the trees which grew in a V-shape down to the water's edge. From this angle those in the village of the valley could not see the canoe as it rapidly neared the rocky beach. It was daylight now, but darkness fell quickly; that was one comfort. For nothing could be done much before the shadows of night hid seekers and fugitives. Micky wrinkled up his nose more than once as he studied Patsy's features and wondered what the colleen's game was. At last he ventured a question.

"How will you be tackling the old devil skins o' sausages?" he asked respectfully.

"I shan't tackle them," retorted Patsy. "What could I do? I'm not a rustler chief or Jack the Giant-killer. What I mean to do is to join Carol. Two heads are better than one."

Micky nearly dropped his paddle.

"Never!" he gasped. "Ye don't mean it? Why, it's two funerals ye'll be having instead of one."

Patsy's lips twitched, but her eyes held herolights.

"I don't agree," she replied; "it may be just a mad notion, but, I have the hang of it in my mind. Listen, Micky! We are going first to find a creek for you to hide in—you and the canoe."

"Never a bit," retorted Micky sturdily, "without you. We'll keep together till the black savages cut us up into mincemeat."

"You *are* cheerful," smiled Patsy, "and don't deserve to know my scheme."

She leaned forward and whispered a few words as though she feared the playful porpoises sporting around might hear her. Micky gasped, rubbed the back of his neck, and then fell to paddling furiously. He would have liked to say it was not one bit fair for Patsy to have a brainwave in which he was doomed to play such a very secondary part.

Patsy probably understood, for she said no more but sat ruminating as she watched the

distance to the shore lessen. All seemed mysteriously quiet on the island, but the smoke still rolled up from the crater, and as her hand trailed in the water Patsy noticed the latter was quite warm. Things were not normal in the neighbourhood of Black Island. Natives and mountain were busy over their secret plans. The air was heavy, suggesting storm, but there were no clouds to be seen; a vaporous haze, blue and transparent, rose to some three feet on shore, giving the trees a curious appearance.

"There's an opening to the left," said Patsy. "*Very* careful now, Micky; if the canoe crumples itself up amongst these rocks we shall have our retreat cut off."

They had seen no sign of a shark, which was cheering, but they noticed as they entered the creek that the water was alive with shoals of small fish. If Patsy had tried to describe everything she would have used the word "weird." The island might very well have been under the spell of an enchanter, Patsy thought, as she climbed out and over the rocks and boulders, then paused to look down at Micky.

"You can hide the canoe amongst those ripping reeds and grasses," she said, and even to herself

her voice sounded unnatural and shrill though she spoke in an undertone, "and then hide as closely as you can, watching out for *us*."

Micky gurgled—or, you might say, grunted—as he looked up from the bank of the creek.

"*Us!*" he echoed.

"Carol and me," replied Patsy serenely. "We shall come together or not at all. Don't get impatient, but, if we don't arrive before Saturday morning, go—er—go back and say what you like; it won't make any difference to us."

Here Micky showed signs of mutiny.

"I'm coming with you," said he.

"*Do*," urged Patsy, "and spoil the whole plan."

The boy groaned. What could he do? Obviously nothing, for Patsy, having said her say and finding it hard to improve on it, walked off, outwardly calm as a cucumber but inwardly wondering whether cucumbers had cold feet. Once, from the shelter of a tree, she looked back but saw no sign of Micky. After all, it was as well she had told him her plan.

It did not appear to be a very elaborate one, for she showed not the least desire to dash from covert to covert or in any way to hide from observation. Instead, she looked pensively about her

and even turned aside once or twice to investigate the foot of the cliff and learn whether there were any caves amongst the rocks. It was still daylight, and she had reached the open ground which swept up from the sea to the mouth of the valley.

"Here I come on Tom Tiddler's ground," murmured Patsy and suddenly thought of dad and Mary Anna, of the jolly Tritons and Mrs. Darlane, of Mrs. Partlone, and her friends on the island near. What a million miles away they all were and she alone, facing the yawning mouth of the valley—the volcano with its bleak sides and smoking crater—which she supposed must be some miles distant—and then—why stiffen your backbone, Patsy from the wilds, for strange, half-naked figures leapt out as it were from lurking places behind the rocks, from the doorways of the huts, from the valley itself, running swiftly towards her—swiftly and with cries which rose in shrill triumph as the Tarmari warriors swooped joyously upon the missing maiden for whom Gentra waited.

## CHAPTER XX

### REUNITED

Carol awoke with a start. She had thought it would be quite impossible to sleep in the stifling atmosphere of her prison, but weariness had overcome her. Unrefreshed, startled through some undiscovered cause, she sprang to her feet. The piled skins on which she had been lying were not uncomfortable, but the curious smell of the hides nauseated her. The light still burned in two large shells, but in the prison there was no opening to the outer air; the space was cramped and the heat intolerable.

Trembling, Carol peered around. There was no furniture, only baskets of fruit and native cakes and a pitcher of water. But, as Carol glanced about her, she saw that part of the rocky wall had given way, and a figure was being thrust in through the aperture. Carol started. The figure was wrapped from head to foot in a cloak of native material, and, as it staggered

blindly forward, it fell prostrate over the basket of fruit.

Carol sprang to the help of the mysterious fellow prisoner, whilst as she did so the rocky wall crashed to. But Carol heard nothing, saw nothing but the face of this comrade.

"*Patsy!*" she cried. "Oh, Patsy!"

Patsy opened her eyes. She had been partly stunned by the fall after having been more than half suffocated by the heavy cloak.

"Carol," whispered the new-comer, and smiled at the sudden memory of how Carol had bent over her—just so—on the night of her arrival at Marcote Court.

Carol was unfolding the wrap from her chum's shoulders.

"How did you come? Why did you come?" she asked breathlessly. "I—I thought you had escaped. Oh, Patsy, tell me true! Did you come back?"

"Shure," retorted Patsy, "and don't dare to thank me, or I'll not believe you know what friendship means. And we're going to escape, Carol, don't worry. Only tell me first, as we'll have to wait, what they've been doing to you."

Carol tried to smile.

"Oh, they've not been too bad—yet," she replied. "They took me off from our first prison to a nerve-racking place first. The chief was very angry—I think his name is Dindrone, or it sounds rather like it. But the next day I was moved again. There were one or two of the tribe from Mifano with the Black Islanders, and one spoke a few words of English. He said or wanted to say that the white man's God was a good God, but that they of the islands must obey the great Gentra who was angry because you had gone, and that I should have to suffer twice over for your absence, though the wise men of the tribe would do their best for me by 'magicking' you back again. Then Gentra would be satisfied, and he, Chiso, the Tarmene, would return to Mifano.

"Of course I listened, but I didn't like it at all. My one prayer was to die quickly. I waited here; they fed me well, and I slept when I was too tired to keep awake. I didn't know night from day, for my watch was broken, but not very long ago I was taken down a lot of passages—which I am sure were leading towards the volcano. The passages were stiflingly hot, and I could hear horrible rumblings and bangs; every time a bang came the natives began to wail.

"At last I was hauled out on to a platform of rock and found crowds of people standing below me. I suppose they were afraid I had escaped too, for they seemed very pleased and yelled a greeting that sounded like 'Kago! Kago!' Then when they had shouted and pow-wowed enough they all stretched themselves flat on the ground in the direction of the volcano. Oh, it was a sad sight, all those hundreds of people worshipping that great hill of rock and earth, whilst the smoke poured out of the crater! Then the men who held me hurried me back, and I have been alone here ever since. Patsy, how I've been praying —but—I didn't pray for you to come and suffer too in helping me."

"Never mind, I'm here, and we are going to escape," said she.

"But how?" asked Carol. "There isn't much time, Patsy, for the native Chiso said the festival of the goddess is very near."

It cost Patsy a good deal to laugh aside those words, and yet she kept a brave face. If once she and Carol lost their courage all would be failure indeed. Perhaps it would be better if she told her scheme now instead of waiting till the last minute. Taking the packets of Bengal lights

from her pockets, she held them up for Carol's inspection.

"When we hear footsteps or know the people are coming to take us," she said, "I shall light both red and green lights, and, when they enter —well, you can guess what the Tarmaris are likely to think. They will—I feel shure, certain, certain, certain shure—turn and bolt like rabbits, thinking we are Gentra—or that Gentra is dealing with us. We must follow as quickly as we can. If we can carry the lights—stick them in those shells and hold them by the chain or cord whichever it is—we ought to keep the natives in a state of pure panic till we are outside. We don't know where 'outside' may be, but we must hide till we get our bearings, and then pray hard till we reach the coast where Micky is watching by the canoe."

Carol was laughing and crying as she listened; it meant hope, and for many days she had seen no way of escape but by death.

"Oh, Patsy, you wonderful Patsy!" she whispered. "I believe after all we are going to escape from this island of Gentra and hideous hob-goblins."

The period of waiting was a racking nerve strain. Being sensible girls, they ate as much

as was possible. They wanted to "be prepared," and after what seemed to be many hours Carol suggested they should take it in turn to sleep—real cat-sleep it was too, but it did refresh them, and at last—oh, at last the sounds for which they had been waiting were heard!

Distant shouting and the beating of native drums suggested that the festival had begun, and presently through all the chaos of sound came the thin, shrill note of some native instrument. Piercing, wailing, with a weird sweetness of its own, it came nearer and nearer, blending with monotonous cries which rose all on the one note, too. Carol and Patsy looked at each other and stiffened into an alert attitude. The time for action had come.

Stooping, Patsy kindled the piece of wick on the top of the Bengal lights, placing them in the shell lamps which they had set on the floor. Gradually the green and red smoke began to rise —would the light be sufficiently ablaze to give the right illusion?

Creak, creak! The smoke rose higher. Creak! The thin music sounded piercingly sweet, the cries grew jangled; then the music ceased, and the wail rose in a note of terror as those who

came as the messengers of Gentra leapt into the prison room. There could be no drawing back; one pushed the other forward till some four or five natives stood spellbound in terror at the amazing sight of the two girls, their arms uplifted, standing there, with green and red light, as it seemed, glowing about them and filling the room. Dindrone, the first to enter, was the first to cry out in horror as he pushed past gaping subjects towards the opening.

Now! The two girls, holding the lights in one hand, climbed after the natives into the dark tunnel which looked terrible enough as the green and red glow filled it. With howls of fear and redoubled energy the Tarmari warriors ran—blind to everything but the horror behind them.

Pursuit confirmed the doubting and satisfied the suspicious that they had made some hideous mistake and had imprisoned the "fire maiden" and her attendant themselves. No doubt the first of the fugitives told the amazing story to the assembled crowds in the valley, for as the girls stepped out into the moonlit valley it was to see the whole crowd in flight.

It was a strange and unforgettable scene for those girls who stood there, revelling in being able

to breathe the pure air and scarcely noticing the suffocating atmosphere of a night which threatened a storm of unusual magnitude.

The volcano still smoked, but less so than two days previously, and the rumblings and quiverings of the ground were less violent; masses of black clouds lay on the horizon or scudded across the sky giving periods of darkness, whilst the sea lay ominously still with that oily smoothness which contains warning for seafaring men.

The girls took in the chief points in the scene. There was going to be a storm, and Jack had already told them what a tropical storm was like! Also, the natives, now in a state of terror, would be the more dangerous if they felt they had been deceived. They must act quickly—praying for guidance.

Carol was leader in the moment of crisis. Setting the shell-lamp with its still suffocating smoke down on a rock, she beckoned Patsy to do the same, then led the way amongst the crags of the valley.

The natives were still hurrying towards the shore, but they would not remain there. Yet for the present the girls realized the shore must be avoided. As they ran, anxious to put some

distance between themselves and their late prison, the sudden crashing of thunder sounded like a discharge of artillery, and instantly the storm was upon them. The rain poured down—tropical rain—one sheet of water which flattened every blade of grass, broke the stem of every flower, and transformed the river of the valley into a raging torrent. It was a case of any port in such a tempest, and as they looked around Patsy discovered to her joy an opening in the cliff-like slope of the valley.

Together the girls staggered towards the covert. Once Carol fell, cutting her leg and straining her side, but she was up again before Patsy could ask her as to her injuries, and a few moments later they had reached the cave. It was too dark at first for them to see what manner of place this was, but they groped forward till they were safely sheltered, then stood, clinging together, glad when a white streak of lightning lit up the rocky walls of the cave. It was little more than a recess in the cliff, but went back far enough to protect them from rain. There were big rocks scattered about, and stalactites of enormous length hung from the roof.

Seating themselves on a slab of stone, the

fugitives pressed close together, shivering in excitement and fear, for never, never had they witnessed such a storm as this. The noise bewildered them. Peal after peal shook the very island itself, the white blaze of lightning cast a lurid glare around, and the roaring of waves told that the sea no longer remained in treacherous calm. It was perfectly impossible to make each other hear, and the girls did not attempt to speak, though both were thinking of poor Micky Brunt down by the shore. Even sheltered by trees it must be a big ordeal for the little lad.

And the natives? If the priest-chief, Dindrone, explained the storm as the fury of Gentra over the escape of prisoners their danger would be intensified, but it was possible the interpretation would be a different one. At any rate for a time there was nothing to do but pray for deliverance and sit still. Several animals and birds, storm driven, took shelter in the cave, but these, being dazed by fear, took no notice of their human companions.

For hours it seemed as if the storm continued, as though it had been sent to destroy all that lived on Black Island, and then—as suddenly as it had

begun it ceased. At first the silence seemed unnatural. All appeared to be waiting breathless for the next crash of thunder, and instead, the swift dawn broke on a clear horizon. White-cheeked, heavy-eyed, Carol and Patsy rose to approach the entrance to the cave, thankful to feel the caress of ozone-filled air.

It was a wonderful dawn upon which the girls looked out, and as the brilliant rose colour flushed sea and sky in a new beauty fear slipped from them. Surely the God of earth and sky and sea Who had delivered them from the very jaws of death would bring them to safety. For some minutes they stood forgetful of wet clothes, hunger, thirst, or danger, thrilled by the beauty of the scene before them. And then—as though some force of evil became intent to drag them down from their moment of exultation—a sound made them turn just as a figure rose from behind one of the rocks.

## CHAPTER XXI

### NERANA

A NATIVE girl stood there, wrapped in a cloak, her dark eyes fixed on Patsy who with a quick intake of breath recognized her as the girl she had rescued from the attack of a wild cat on the island of Mifano. Before she could speak, the girl raised her hand, pointing to herself.

"Nerana," she said.

It was a simple form of introduction, and both Carol and Patsy smiled as they stepped forward to greet one who was not yet declared as friend or foe. Nerana drew the cloak she wore about her and took no notice of hands of greeting, but she was evidently more friendly than otherwise and spoke again, still addressing Patsy.

"Nerana—make," she said, and pointed this time to the opening, moving and beckoning as though inviting the strangers to follow her, but when they did so she showed some excitement and even led them back to the safest shelter at

the back of the cave; then, pointing again to the entrance and shaking her head, she went through the pantomime of eating and afterwards hastily left the cave.

"She's gone," said Patsy dolefully; "what is she going to do? I thought she meant she would bring breakfast. Good for her! I'm starved."

Carol was too anxious to think of food.

"She'll bring Dindrone," she sighed; "they are terrorized, these people. Gentra comes first and the rest of humanity a long way after. Let's get down to the shore and find Micky."

Patsy shook her head. "No," she replied, "it would be running our heads against a stone wall. Look, I can see canoes out on the sea already, and, if we climbed out beyond those rocks, we should, I am sure, see people moving about in the village. It must be better to wait till night. If one person saw us now it would be fatal."

"One person has seen us," sighed Carol, "but perhaps you are right—we will wait and see."

Day was coming swiftly, a day of sunshine and intense heat but without the suffocating miasma which had been so unbearable. Hours passed, and Nerana had not returned. They were without food, but there was at least water to drink.

It was very strange—this suspense. Had Nerana feared to befriend them but been too grateful to betray? Darkness fell—without a glimmer of moonlight. The volcano was quieter than it had been for days. Carol was dozing, and Patsy was fast asleep when a whisper roused the elder girl!

"Carol! Patsy!"

It was the voice of Micky Brunt! Starting up, the girls replied in tremulous tones. Oh, it must be a dream—and yet—

"Micky!" they chorused, and felt rather than saw a figure thrusting itself between the rocks with hands outstretched towards them. "Micky!"

It was he, and as they grabbed the boy's hands they were laughing and crying hysterically. It was Patsy who first discovered Nerana. Micky also turned towards the native girl.

"She's a darlint," he said; "she let me know somehow that you were safe, and she has a cargo of food wrapped under her cloak. I've my torch if it's safe to bring it out."

"And the canoe?" asked Patsy, as the four crouched together at the back of the cave and Nerana produced the welcome food.

"Smashed to smithereens," sighed Micky. "But I believe Nerana will be able to find us one.

You must have been good to her, for she seems to love you."

Patsy beamed as Micky's torch showed her the dark face of the girl who had proved to be no ingrate.

"I'd like to hug her," she said, "only we're all too wet. The angel—yes, a dear, dusky darlint of an angel! She's a jewel. I wish I knew Tarmari talk."

But, though gratitude had to be shown dumbly, Nerana seemed more than satisfied when Patsy took her hand and kissed it. She talked too, no doubt explaining a great deal they would have liked to know, but though they could not interpret words they all felt that this ignorant girl knew at least one beautiful lesson—sacrifice. For, had her people known what she was doing, her fate would have no doubt been a cruel one.

As they ate—ravenously—the queer rice cakes and ripe fruit, Micky gave a brief account of his own adventures. He had been obliged to do plenty of dodging to avoid discovery, and when the storm broke was lying amongst the rocks on the shore. He had failed to get the canoe under cover and had been nearly killed himself by a falling tree, blasted by lightning. Vividly he

described the terror of the forest creatures, the terrific spectacle of the storm, and how he had lain stunned by the uproar, remembering little till he found Nerana crouched near him. At first he believed himself to be a prisoner; then, finding she was alone, he had tried to follow her vivid pantomime.

"It was all desp'rate," he concluded. "So I chanced my luck and came along, and when I saw you ladies I nearly bust myself wid joy. Nerana's a black angel, and we ought to be able to trust her. Seems to me she wants to do a bit more pantomime."

Nerana was showing signs of restlessness now that a rising moon shed light on their surroundings. Patsy, being voted the best actress, entered with spirit into her dumb questioning, which Nerana watched with frequent nods of her head. When Patsy sat pretending to use a paddle Nerana clapped her hands and moved towards the entrance of the cave. Yes, it was time to leave Black Island, but was the way really open?

Micky was the most confident and walked ahead with the native girl. Down the valley they went, pausing first to look towards the mountain;

the moonlight was intermittent, and little beyond the outline of the rugged hillside was visible, the loudest sound being that of the rushing of the swollen stream as it dashed over its rocky bed. There were no signs now of people moving about; all was still and silent.

Nerana led the way down towards the river, and the three followed, growing somehow less confident as they approached the neighbourhood of the village. The girls saw Micky trying more of his dumb show, but Nerana only shook her head and held stubbornly on her way. Presently Micky dropped back.

"There are two canoes," he said softly, "down there by the reef. Don't let the girl see us looking; we may have to make a dash for it. I don't like the way we are going."

Neither did the girls—in fact, they were heading straight for the village. Suddenly, as they reached a row of crags, Nerana halted, her hands clenched, her head thrust forward. Still as a statue, she stood as though listening, and heard only the cries of forest animals, the plaintive note of a night bird. And then it was Nerana who cried—one long piercing cry—pealing upward into silence as she sprang towards the crags and disappeared

from view. Poor untutored savage, she had betrayed them after all!

Carol was alert now—all three of them were on the qui vive and at Carol's command turned swiftly.

"The canoes," she said hoarsely, "the canoes."

They were running—oh, how they ran! The ground was treacherous enough, but these three did not miss a chance. Leaping from rock to rock, they raced forward and as they did so heard a clamour of voices, the beating of drums, the screaming of strange instruments as the Tarmaris, aroused from sleep, heard that another crisis was here. And over the rocks they came—hastening, racing, spreading themselves into a great semi-circle which drew closer and closer. Patsy, measuring distances, saw themselves trapped and stopped short, crying to Micky.

"The lights, set them burning—the lights."

Micky understood—but what a gamble it was! The brief halt robbed them of a sporting chance to reach the canoes, but Patsy's was a master will.

"The lights," she stormed, and Micky had them out, had a match safely guarded from last night's rain, and set the light to the wick. Fuzz! Was

it damp? If so, they were doomed, but no—red and green smoke began to rise—higher—higher.

On raced the fugitives but the natives had halted, spellbound. It was the magic of Gentra —the mystery message of the goddess.

"Kago! Ka—ago!"

But those three mysterious visitors had now reached the shore, had reached the canoe, had launched the little craft and sprung in.

"Ka—ago! Kaago!"

Would the Tarmaris follow? Or would they be too late? Would they lose their opportunity by waiting to interpret a sign they had not yet understood?

## CHAPTER XXII

### AN ERRAND OF MERCY

PATSY, with great presence of mind, had snatched a paddle from the second canoe and was using it with a vigour which sent the cockle-shell craft racing over the waves. The sea was calm, and the light clear enough now to show them the outline of the other island.

Now and again, Patsy, pausing in her paddling, looked back and saw the black mass which crowded the shore behind them. But the men of Black Island did not pursue those for whom Gentra had fought; the weird lights so mysteriously beautiful had brought their message.

Gentra—who had vanished from the green and red clouds still rolling up from amongst the rocks—had returned to her own home from the prison where for so long she had fought for freedom. No doubt the strange maidens had brought the message and perhaps guided the goddess herself from the heart of the mountain. Curious as it

may seem, the detonations had ceased, and the volcano, though it still smoked furiously, had become silent.

So the Tarmari warriors, interpreting the happenings of the night in their own way, returned slowly to their homes, leaving the fugitives to go whither they please, or to vanish into the blue of mystery.

"We are safe," whispered Patsy, sobbing, "thank God we are safe!"

It seemed too wonderful, too good to be true, and yet facts remained facts, and the canoe, riding on the crest of a wave, was presently swept on to the white beach of Mifano. Surely a hymn of praise went up from the sands as those three tired adventurers struck the path to the missionary camp.

"We never thought we'd see another dawn, Carol, did we?" said Patsy softly. "It is like a dream, but the best sort of one—a dream which gives one a lump in one's throat. Shure, I never thought Mifano could feel like home, but it does."

The adventure did not seem quite at an end however, for it was Jack who met them on the verandah, clad in his pyjamas, the sleep swept from his eyes by excitement.

"Micky!" he stormed. "You—you snake! But it's all right, really, if you've brought the girls. But where is Dad? Where are Donald and Tifo? Roger saw you coming and dashed yelling in here. Mother's dressing. Where——"

He stopped abruptly, dismayed by their blank faces.

"Mr. Barnley?" said Patsy. "What do you mean?"

The appearance of Mrs. Barnley and Mrs. Lathways checked further questioning, for Mrs. Barnley had heard—and understood.

"Mr. Barnley, Donald, and Tifo rowed across to Black Island at first streak of dawn," she said slowly. "We—we heard that the feast of Gentra had been fixed for to-day. And so my husband and the others started as soon as it was light. They *had* to go—in search of Carol."

She looked at Carol as she spoke, and tears filled her eyes.

"My dear!" she said. "My dear!"—and held open her arms.

It was a rather trying five minutes. However, when tears were dried—or swallowed—Mrs. Lathways came to the rescue by announcing that coffee

was ready, and a meal, and that possibly, whilst they breakfasted, stories might be exchanged.

Carol was so exhausted that she was packed off to bed with a bowl of bread and milk and instructions to sleep the clock round. Patsy—being commander-in-chief and heroine in special—insisted masterfully on remaining at the breakfast-table. What a vivid tale she told too! A tale which made the whole adventure live before the eyes of her listeners who could not have interposed one word till all was told.

"A great deliverance for which to thank a great Deliverer," said Mrs. Barnley softly, and then quietly repeated the story of her husband's devotion in going across to Black Island, daring death for duty. She could not dwell on details or last words, nor had her listeners anything to say when she had finished. Words seemed so feeble—thanks were actually out of place.

After breakfast Patsy for one was ready to go to bed, but Micky by this time had vanished in company with Jack, so that it was easier to tell in a few words what a hero the little stowaway had been. Jack had been heartbroken in being left out of the "fun," and Mrs. Barnley had some trouble in hiding her fear now that he

might feel it necessary to go in search of his father.

"I'll go up to the red cliff," said Patsy. "I'm not tired, and if I can see anything going on on Black Island I'll let you know."

She was sorry not to find the two boys as she climbed the steep path. She had said she was not tired, but it was odd that after her meal a slackness and weariness stole over her, and by the time she reached the red cliff summit she had one desire only—to sleep.

Opposite, Black Island lay basking in the sunlight. It was a glorious day, and so easy to believe all tragedy was over. But, below, Patsy knew well that Lena Barnley was bravely fighting a growing fear, and the fear was there in her own heart too. It was too dreadful to think what would happen if the Black Islanders were in a vengeful mood when the white God's messenger appeared.

"If only we could escape from these horrible islands," sighed Patsy. "Shure, it's the creeps they give me. I——"

She was up on her feet all at once whilst the strangest thrill convulsed her. Oh, never—never—never could that be a steamer away on the

horizon, growing bigger and nearer every second? Patsy looked round in despair.

"There's no one at all to signal but myself," she sobbed. "And no flag. I can't remember a word of Morse and——" She was searching the landscape to find signs of a comrade, then recalled the fact that she still wore a petticoat that had once been white. Crying more than laughing, Patsy tore at the offending garment whilst she ran in the direction of some trees. Every second might be the second too late! Every moment!

She was lucky, for a slender branch lay at the foot of a tree. It was a matter of seconds before the strip of calico was secured to that rough cudgel, and then Patsy advanced to the very edge of the cliff.

She had first learned her Morse in the courtyard of Castle Kerraford, and she had not forgotten it. To and fro that white flag flickered, drooped, waved high, spread itself out.

"Help! We want a boat to put off. Shipwrecked passengers," signalled Patsy. "Help!"

The great steamer glided on its way till hope sank.

"We—want—a—boat!"

It was strange that even as the message was

flashed out to those on the horizon a little black-ribbed canoe came darting out from behind a reef of rocks and scudding towards Mifano.

"Help—shipwrecked passengers!"

Then down went the white flag, for Patsy had seen that slender black craft as it came hastening towards the beach. Oh, the joy of it, the joy! Down the cliff path scrambled Patsy, whilst Jack and Micky appearing from amongst the trees below ran down to the water's edge. Patsy could hear Jack's voice raised in a shout of welcome.

"Dad! Dad! Hurrah! It's Dad and the others, all safe!"

Yes, they were safe. Patsy chanced a desperate jump and reached the sands just as Mr. Barnley came up over the rocks, smiling and waving as he waved to her and listened to his young son's incoherent story of adventure and escape. Patsy, her eyes shining but her lips dumb, joined the triumphal party, understanding that Mr. Barnley wished to reach home before he told his tale.

Tifo however had outstripped the rest, and Lena Barnley with the Lathways and Carol were on the verandah as the party approached. What a greeting it was—with so much emotion to be

swallowed wholesale that Micky and Jack started pinching each other to let off steam!

Cecil Barnley told the outline of his tale in a few graphic sentences. He was in the happiest mood, success helping him to forget the late strain to nerves.

"Dindrone and his warriors met me," he said. "I must have passed Carol and the others on the way to the island, but I suppose the long reef hid us at the moment. It was lucky, for not for the world would I have missed the pow-wow. Dindrone was most amazingly subdued. Gentra, he told me, was free and had returned to the Fire King, her father. She had taken her messenger maiden, and they had gone in peace. The mountain—Gentra's prison—was now silent, and the Tarmaris, having lost their grim goddess, were prepared to accept the white man's God."

"After all these years," said Lena Barnley softly. "After all these years."

It was too great a joy to share even with friends, and Cecil Barnley quietly followed his wife to her room. It was Jack who a few minutes later put the crowning touch to a tremendous day.

"Look!" he shouted. "White men, sailors,

down there, half a dozen of them. It must be a boat—a steamer. Huzza! Huzza!"

Patsy rocked. She had actually forgotten the steamer, and yet these men had come in answer to her signal, had come to take them home.

It did not take the younger members of the party long to reach the sands where, truly enough, some half dozen men stood in consultation, first looking towards the cliff from which the signal had been waved and then strolling along the rocky coast. Jack, Micky, and the girls made a rush, and you can guess that the young officer of the *Palestine* was somewhat staggered by the greeting he received. Patsy and Carol each seized a hand and nearly wrung it off.

"Oh, we *were* so afraid the boat would pass!" said Patsy. "We never would have forgiven you if you had sailed away and left us here."

Rob Sinclair laughed. "It is you who are so amazing," he said; "to tell the truth we didn't know much about these islands, but we had an idea they were the haunts of cannibals and woolly-headed horrors of all kinds. How did you manage to get located amongst the volcanoes and mystery folk?"

"It's not really a mystery island," said Patsy.

"At least not like Black Island over there; here we have a missionary settlement and a most respectable village. Come back with us and hear all about it before you take us away—before—oh, Carol, do you feel just the wee-est bit sorry we can't stay here for a few days longer to say our good-byes properly?"

Carol smiled and shook her head. The memory of those awful days of loneliness in that terrible prison made her long to get away.

"Only I do wish the Barnleys were coming with us," she admitted. "I don't think I ever could trust Dindrone and the Black Islanders."

Mr. and Mrs. Barnley were already deep in talk with the new-comers who were not only interested to hear of the romance of Gentra's fête day but keen to visit Black Island.

"If you will allow me," said Sinclair eagerly, "I will go back to the steamer and ask the Captain to come ashore too. I'm sure, sir, you will understand when I say that, much as I admire your courage in remaining amongst such a horde of savages, I should try to find out whether the danger of an eruption is imminent, for, if the volcano becomes active again, the natives would soon make mincemeat of the white people."

"We have Professor Tollin aboard too," added a bright-faced lad who had come with Sinclair. "What do you say, sir? If we brought him along he might be able to tell us the chances of things quieting down."

"Good for you, Bates," said Sinclair heartily; "we'll bring Tollin along. Don't be afraid, girls, that we are going to slip away, but this is a big job, and we must find out about the natives before we leave your friends here."

No one was keener about this than Carol and Patsy who were frankly dismayed at the Barnleys' decision to remain where they were. What ages it seemed to have to wait for the return of their new friends! Mrs. Barnley suggested a return to the bungalow where the Lathways had waited—no less excited than their young friends, but more businesslike in hastily packing their few belongings. Mrs. Barnley set about preparations for tea, and the others gathered together chatting and talking of the great event. Curiously enough, the Lathways as well as the girls were more concerned over the Barnleys' resolve to remain in Mifano than with their own long-prayed-for escape.

Micky Brunt quietly announced his intention

of remaining. He seemed half ashamed of the decision, as he looked at Patsy, but his confession was simplicity itself.

"I couldn't leave Jack," he urged. "And I've no home. I don't mind no old volcanoes or niggers. And I'd bust with frettin' if I had to go."

Because after all it was the wisest and best thing the lonely little lad could do no one suggested that he would have to go. Jack beamed at the decision too; he had had a curious lump in his own throat at the idea of losing all these good comrades. And he loved Micky.

At last the party from the steamer hove in sight, and those on the verandah went down to greet them. The Tarmenes were invisible to-day; even Tifo and Malos remained at home, waiting for the clouds to clear and for things to jog on again as they had before the thunder of Gentra had disturbed the peace of the community.

Professor Tollin was as excited as a schoolboy and all agog to hasten over to Black Island, whilst Captain Morton hummed and ha-ed and spoke of the date fixed for arrival at Sumatra.

But the Professor had his way, and off the little party of men started once again for the beach. But not without one of those interruptions which

always seem to come when we are busiest. For, half way through the forest, they met Tifo and Malos hastening towards them. The men were evidently very agitated and flung themselves on the ground before Cecil Barnley who stood listening in perplexity to the gabble which was so meaningless to the others. Evidently it was fairly serious news judging from the distress visible on the missionary's face, and when the story had been told, Barnley turned at once to his companions.

"I doubt whether it would be a wise moment to visit Black Island," he said; "it appears that the natives have turned against their priest-chief, Dindrone, and are threatening to torture him and his relatives in punishment for having imprisoned the 'children of Gentra' as they now style those two girls, Patsy and Carol. Tifo asks whether the God of Whom we preach could save their neighbours from what would end in a hideous civil war which might spread to this island. Tifo declares if the 'White Maidens' would go now to Black Island and show friendliness to Dindrone all would be well. It will also be my great chance to preach to these ignorant savages the story of a God of Love; but—how could I ask girls who

have already gone through such nerve-racking experiences to face a fresh peril? For—Tifo may be mistaken."

Captain Morton looked at Sinclair whilst Professor Tollin impatiently hinted that the girls could be asked since—well, there was no need to go on with the argument as Malos, having slipped away amongst the trees, had already carried the story to the bungalow where the girls, having no packing to do, were talking to Jack and Micky.

Malos did not waste time in making his petition which was received for a moment in silence. The girls had been thrilling with the joy of leaving the neighbourhood of that terrible Black Island, and this invitation to go across to it staggered them. But—how could they refuse? If Mr. Barnley's preaching was to reach the hearts of these ignorant folk, other Christians must show their mettle. It was Carol—the prisoner of that "dark place"—who caught Patsy's cold hand.

"Of course we will come, Malos," said she, "and Dindrone shall know what the white preacher says is true."

In his delight Malos leapt high in the air. Now, all would be well, and the threatened evil would be averted.

"We are not going to be left out of it this time," breathed Jack determinedly, and as there was no time to argue the four ran down the steps and across towards the forest, vaguely hoping that Mrs. Barnley would remain talking to Eva Lathways till they were back again.

Professor Tollin at least gave the adventurous four a welcome, and though Mr. Barnley suppressed a groan he did not attempt to send back those smiling volunteers, for even Carol was smiling as she stepped into the canoe beside Tifo, her glance directed bravely towards the island where the smoke from the volcano still drifted across the sky.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE FIRE MAIDENS' INTERCESSION

"WHAT are they doing?"

It was Captain Morton who asked the question as the occupants of the canoe stepped ashore on Black Island. And well indeed might a stranger cry out in surprise, for the whole of the valley which stretched between high cliffs to the very foot of the volcano was crowded with natives who stood silent as though waiting for a supreme moment—an event so startling that it held them breathless. But Barnley, who for years had had experience of these natives, answered as he pointed to a cave under the cliff where a huge fire was blazing.

"That is the Cave of Sacrifice," he replied, "where the fires which burn the human victims are supposed to quench the fires of Gentra's wrath. I suppose Dindrone and his friends are to be sacrificed there. We shall have a tough job now. Look."

Patsy stifled a cry of horror, for the huge crowd had split, leaving a pathway down which a group of Tarmari warriors carried the victims who a short time ago had been their rulers. Flowers were being flung as if in honour to the unfortunate men and their doomed families, and the Europeans standing near marvelled at the silent resignation of those who saw death in hideous form before them. Then, to Barnley's own amazement, he saw Patsy and Carol run forward, then stand and stoop, lighting the fuse which was ready for kindling on the top of a small box.

"What—on—earth——" growled the Captain, whilst the younger officers shook with laughing admiration.

Once again the simple expedient of Bengal lights was coming to the rescue of men and women. As the green and red smoke rose high, lighting the quickly gathering dusk with a strange glare, the Tarmaris turned and saw in amaze the daughters of the Fire Maiden erect, silent, but with hands outstretched towards the Cave of Sacrifice.

It was a moment of spellbound silence, a moment that none of the spectators would ever forget. It was Cecil Barnley who, having

reached the summit of a huge rock near, cried out in Tarmari language.

"You shall listen, my children," he cried, "listen or you shall weep in sorrow and despair. For Dindrone and these others must not die. They are forgiven by these maidens who come back as messengers from a Greater than Gentra, for they are servants of the Great God whom the white man worships. And the message they bring is life—forgiveness, the sacrifice of love. Come, cut these bonds and call for the making of a feast of laughter at which our wise man, he with the grey beard and much wisdom, will tell you if the mountain of thunder will speak again of destruction."

Not all could hear the speaker's voice, though it rang clear and strong, but it did not take many minutes for the gist of his speech to be tossed from mouth to mouth, and, as they heard, a delirium of joy and relief swept up the valley. Dindrone's bonds were cut, his friends were freed, the flames of the fire within that cave were beaten out, and the whole scene became changed from a death-like hush of fear to wild revelry.

Barnley succeeded, chiefly through the good offices of the grateful Dindrone, in getting the

Professor by a secret route towards the volcano, whilst young Sinclair was detailed off rather against his wish to take the girls back in the canoe to a spot half-way between the islands where they could watch an unforgettable scene.

"It's no use staying where your admirers will want to be mincing you up small so that they can have souvenirs," said Captain Morton in his grimly humorous way. "So off you go and get a bird's-eye view of this particularly choice beano."

Deep in their hearts the girls were glad when they were safely afloat. The moon was now rising over the sea, and, as the white moonbeams came stealing over the waters, it seemed to the girls that a silver ladder led homeward. But the few minutes' hush was broken very soon by the chanting of hundreds of voices. Once again the Tarmaris were busy at their weird rites. But there was nothing cruel this time in the lighting of fires and the dancing and singing of those simple but ignorant savages.

"They are singing Gentra to sleep," suggested Patsy. "Shure, it's rather after the style of a mighty wake. Did you ever see anything like the way they leap and skip? Faster, faster, and

the girls are bringing flowers. What are they doing, Mr. Sinclair? Some of them are getting into their canoes?"

Sinclair whistled. The moonlight showed them dozens of Tarmari warriors loading their canoes with flowers and getting into them. It rather looked as if they were coming to fetch back their Fire Maidens, but, before the fleet had launched, a cry rose from the valley.

Professor Tollin had learned the secret of the mountain and was proclaiming news which evidently caused the wildest excitement. A crowd of warriors came charging down to the beach headed by Dindrone himself. Then—the fun began.

Patsy heard Sinclair groan and knew how he longed to be enjoying the outlandish revel. And, oh, the music! Shriller, shriller, more piercing till even Carol shook off the sense of terror and joined Patsy in clapping her hands.

"Look, the boats," cried Patsy. "The canoes. They are coming."

"I don't see the Captain," said Sinclair, "and my orders are fairly drastic. I suppose I'd better paddle my own canoe back to your own particular isle."

"Look," was all Patsy's rejoinder.

The native flotilla had spread out so that the canoes circling round the one in the centre drew close, hemming it in. Prisoners! Or was it honoured guests?

"Karli! Karli! Kaago," boomed the voices, and the girls could not help being thrilled as they saw the masses of flowers flung into the sea along their path, as Sinclair, seeing only one way left, took it like a sensible fellow, and, paddling slowly, brought his companions back over the moonlit waves to where a huge crowd awaited them. But the crowd being headed by Dindrone, the Professor, and Cecil Barnley, the girls lost their fear. There was no mistaking the peace pact that was being sealed. Barnley's face was one wide smile, and the boys were openly displaying their delight.

"The volcano will give no more trouble for a time at least," said Tollin as the three landed. "I doubt indeed whether it will ever cause any destruction. The people are satisfied our friend Mr. Barnley is right, and I believe your series of adventures has helped to give him his heart's desire. He is of course making a programme of teaching for months ahead. Meanwhile we are

getting something of a send-off. Don't worry, young ladies, for you are the heroines of the hour."

There was not time for more. The grateful Dindrone was going to have his turn now and prepared to stage it royally.

What a night it was! The girls, though bewildered by the noise and shouting, rather enjoyed the fun of it all. Nearly smothered by flowers, breathless with dancing, they stood facing the fire, clinging together whilst Tarmaris sang a tale of gratitude to the lovely Fire Maidens. Afterwards—Mr. Barnley managed to explain it was time to go even before the feasting. Sinclair and the boys took the girls' hands and just ran them to the canoes.

"I shure will never, never be cool again!" panted Patsy, as she sank back. "If it weren't for the sharks I'd *swim* home!"

But the sharks vetoed all bathing, preferring to keep that corner of the ocean to themselves, and, after all, it was possible to sit up and look smiling by the time Mifano was reached.

"It's home, dearie, home, that's where I would be," sang Patsy softly, and then with tears in her eyes looked at Carol.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE NEW MOTHER

GOOD-BYES are hateful. Patsy and Carol had to confess that, though they simply jumped with joy to be leaving that mystery island, they hated saying good-bye to the Barnleys—and Micky. The latter was frankly tearful, and he and Patsy wept together. The Lathways were the most impatient of the party to be away, and Carol herself breathed a sigh of thankfulness when she stepped into the boat.

"When you come to England you must come and stay with us, Lena," urged Eva Lathways, whilst Patsy gave Jack a final hug. "You'll all love Castle Kerraford," Patsy urged. "I do hope all the Tarmaris will turn saints so that you can have a holiday."

It did not take long to reach the *Palestine*, and so, with final wavings and signals, the little party leaned over the taffrail of the great boat till they could no longer see that little group of friends.

Captain Morton had already told his new passengers that he was bound for Sumatra, and Patsy had plenty of time to plan how she was to find Vrow van Kemp's home at Palembang. Would Dad and the new mother still be there? It was curious how nervous Patsy found herself becoming before the end of that "long, long trail."

"I get a lump in my throat every time I think of darling Tante," she told Carol. "I wonder —oh, I do wonder if there was any hope that she was saved?"

Carol shook her head. It seemed such a slender hope that any boat could have survived so wild a night. What a queer feeling it was too when at last they landed in that strange and wonderful island of Sumatra. The Lathways were going farther on, and greatly to the Captain's regret none but a party of Dutch people travelling second-class left the boat at this point. But the Van Neckerns were kindly folk and suggested taking the girls with them as far as their destination. They not only knew Palembang, but the Van Kemps had been patrons of theirs in old days.

"At last," whispered Patsy, squeezing Carol's

hand as they came in sight of the long low building where her "new mother's" people lived. They only just seemed to discover how very shabby their clothes were.

"Even though Mifano wasn't a desert island it was the next-door thing," said Patsy pensively, as she straightened her coat collar and shook back her curls, "and I do wish——"

It was in her heart to cry aloud that it was Dad she wanted—and dared not hope yet to see. They had to prepare for finding this unknown Vrow van Kemp dead, and the new owner installed. But being a pair of brave lassies neither Patsy nor Carol made moan of their fears but faced the white road in the blazing sunshine, trying to make believe that all was going to be merry as a marriage bell. It was a surprise to see a lady coming down the road with its borders of tropical vegetation and the glimpse of the low, white house beyond. It was Carol who went forward in front of Patsy to ask a question.

"Does Vrow van Kemp live here, please?" she asked, and in spite of her courage her voice shook slightly.

The lady, clear-eyed, alert, kindly, with a happy

smile and what Patsy called a "comical look," shook her head, and the smile faded.

"Vrow van Kemp died a few weeks ago," she replied. "I am her sister, Lady O'——"

"Oh!" gasped Patsy, breathless and thrilled. "Then Dad *is* here."

It was the lady's turn to show amazement. She flushed crimson and stood, hands clasped, looking from one girl to the other.

"But our Patsy and her friend were—drowned," she whispered.

Then, somehow knowing she need not stand aloof from this sort of step-mother, Patsy from the wilds flung herself into Lady O'Manlon's arms.

"We were not drowned at all, at all," she sobbed; "this is Carol and I."

"My dear—you have your father's eyes," whispered the other as she hugged the new little daughter fast.

Really, it was a wonder the three didn't get sunstroke standing there; only a friendly tree stretching wide branches helped to save the situation, and, oh, the joy of telling the story of adventure, the tears over past griefs, and then that wonderful bit of news to crown all in hearing that dear Tante had not been drowned, but,

miracle of miracles, was here in this very house where Sadie O'Manlon and the faithful Ann had nursed her back to health and strength.

Patsy was like a wild thing; it was all a fairy tale, a wonder tale, a crowning joy on what was already beginning to feel like a story-book romance with the best bit still to come. O—o—oh! Do you know that sort of gasp before the big thrill?

Patsy's big thrill was when Sadie O'Manlon pushed her and Carol behind the biggest of trees whilst she went to greet the someone she had been on her way to meet. And the someone was—Dad.

Carol could not help feeling a trifle forlorn as she watched Patsy's father and step-mother coming up the path together. The girls could not hear what was being said but saw Sir Thomas start and begin to talk excitedly. They heard the words "Patsy! My little Patsy! No, Sadie, don't ask me to hope, or—I couldn't bear the disappointment. There can't be any chance."

"But there was," called Patsy. "The top of the morning to you, Dad, for it's Patsy who's the bad penny turning up to tell you the new mother is a darlint entirely."

That was all, and Carol did think it sweet of Lady O'Manlon to come to where she stood and take her hand, walking down the loveliest path to the house and talking so sweetly about her parents and asking if Captain Morton had sent a message over the seas to tell them she too was safe. Carol was eager to talk of that message and its answer, whilst Patsy was trying not to cry or believe tears stood in Dad's eyes as they welcomed each other on the opposite side of the world to dear old Ireland.

That was a golden day—Patsy said a diamond day, as gold didn't explain it well enough, but whether gold or jewel it was a day of radiant happiness in which everyone talked and laughed and had all so much to say that they hardly listened to the others. Patsy sat as of old "right in her father's pocket," and instead of finding the new step-mother had stolen her darling Dad away it seemed as if he had given her what he had so often longed to give her—a mother's care.

"I know now why even hideous adventures are glorious," said Patsy dreamily, as she tucked her arm through Lady O'Manlon's; "it shure is because they have happy endings"—and she

looked across to where that dearest of Tantes sat with Carol's hand in hers.

Mrs. Partlone had been almost as overjoyed as Sir Thomas and his wife to welcome her lost lambs. How she had blessed and kissed and wondered over them! Even the sedate Ann had come out of her shell and shed tears of thankfulness at the escape of her dear, blessed young ladies.

Patsy's only complaint was that they never, never could finish talking, and yet they did so want to see some of the loveliness of Sumatra before they left. And so a dozen times a day they planned to leave all tale-telling till they were homeward bound, and then a dozen times a day they started to talk again. But, as Mrs. Partlone whispered, she for one did not want to hear too much about Black Island for fear of having nightmare, and as Dad rather agreed with this the girls found their special joy in thrilling Ann with the tale of Gentra and her Fire Maidens. You can guess what Ann thought of it all!

## CHAPTER XXV

### BACK AT MARCOTE

ADVENTURES, like other things good and bad, have an end.

"Only I almost wish the Sumatra part of the adventure had been longer," declared Patsy, as she stood with the others watching the white cliffs of England looming in sight.

During those weeks in the wonderland of Sumatra Patsy and her step-mother had learned to love each other truly, and now as they stood together there was only one little crumpled rose leaf in Patsy's bed of content. That was—school. Not that she disliked school, oh, no! Not that she didn't thrill to think of telling dear Mrs. Darlane and the Tritons all those wonderful tales; but Dad had decided to leave Patsy at Marcote Court on his way to Ireland.

Term had begun, and of course it was much the best and easiest thing to do, though Patsy had longed for a peep at Castle Kerraford and all

the dear home faces. But, after all, it was not very long to Easter, and she had to make up for lost time. Besides, Sir Thomas and Patsy's "mother" wanted to go home by themselves just for the first time so that the old place might be "magicked" back into a real home. Carol, whose parents lived nearer the school, was going straight home and would be back at Marcote Court within a week. Of course her parents would have to welcome their darling after such a terrible time of anxiety.

"There are Mum and Dad—and Sylvia," was Carol's joyous cry, as the great boat came to a standstill near the landing stage. "Look, Patsy —they are waving, and—and——"

It wasn't like Carol to cry with the excitement of it, but who could help it? Mrs. Harless herself was crying as she folded her arms about the child she had mourned as dead. It was a moment of emotion, tears, and laughter, and it had to be Patsy from the wilds who created the laugh by dropping some of her packages, grabbing wildly as the contents were strewn over the ground. In the fun of collecting those odds and ends which had simply refused to be packed in the trunks tears were forgotten.

There were trains to be caught afterwards, and in the rush of catching them farewells were hasty. As Patsy and Carol hugged each other, it seemed almost impossible that the experiences they had shared could be true. Gentra, Mifano, and Black Island grew remote and hazy as hands were waved, brief *au revoirs* shouted, and Patsy, with a long sigh, turned to Dad.

"And now it is my turn," she murmured, "but I—I'm glad you and Mother are going straight —home, for I can get on splendidly alone. I—no, you are not coming out of your way for me, you darlints. I shall be home again almost before you can turn round, and you know I love Marcote Court."

It was bravely said, for Patsy was hating the idea of a lonely journey back to school. Sadie O'Manlon guessed that, for her good-bye kiss was very loving.

"We shall just be busy till it is time to welcome our daughter home," she whispered.

And Patsy, blinking back the tears, smiled into those kind blue eyes.

"Shure, it was stupid of me even for a moment not to want to have a—mother," said she, and how glad that new mother was to hear the words

which Patsy's father had listened to with so happy a smile.

* * *

And now before we say good-bye to Patsy from the wilds we want to peep at her as she stands at the door of that once dreaded English school, waiting for it to be opened. It was Ann, the maid, who came to see who was there, and Ann who had the first thrill at sight of the visitor. How Patsy laughed as she seized the maid's hand just to show her she was not the ghost she feared.

"It's Patsy O'Manlon, Ann," she sang; "didn't Mrs. Darlane know I was coming?"

But it was Mrs. Darlane herself who answered the question, and Patsy would never be doubting her love for her after that greeting.

"No one but the mistresses know of your return, dear," she said, as she and Patsy sat side by side on the big sofa in her room. "Of course they have heard you both reached Sumatra. I shall never forget reading the news to them at the end of last term. You have crept into many hearts, little Patsy, during your few months with us, and I know that you will enjoy your welcome home. Come up to the schoolroom with me and find out

for yourself how thankful we at Marcote Court are to have you amongst us again."

How thrilling it was—and such fun too! Patsy stood out in the passage waiting for the great moment, but she could hear Mrs. Darlane announcing a visitor and then the pause as some of the girls tried to guess who it was. No one guessed right though, so it was Patsy herself who, unable to wait one minute longer, came running in.

"Oh, girls!" she cried.

But there was no time for a speech. Agatha, Pauline, and Myra made a bee line for her, upsetting chairs, pupils, books, *en route,* and never pausing to apologize as they fell upon their deeply mourned chum. How everyone cheered and laughed! Some went mad for a bit, others sat apart looking just a wee bit disdainful, but everyone was interested, yes, and thrilled too as Patsy, standing on a table, (after Mrs. Darlane had gone) gave a vivid description "in a nutshell" of all her adventures. It was "some nutshell" too!

"I know all about shipwrecks, volcanoes, cannibals, sacrifices, snakes, and mystery islands, *shure,*" said Patsy, "enough to fill a dozen books. But Carol will have to tell half the story at least,

so you'll have to wait till she comes. I do believe it's enough to-day for me to say I'm—I'm delighted—and happy—and glad—what other word can I use?—to be back again. You used to call me Patsy from the wilds, didn't you? So now you'll have to fix a bit more on and say "Patsy and Carol from the Volcano." Will that do, Tritons?"

And, though everyone yelled, you could hear three voices over all, for the Tritons were howling out their pride in this comrade of comrades who somehow to them was and always would be just Patsy.

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## WINGS FOR A GULL

ARTHUR CATHERALL

When Captain George Silver took his niece Peg and her Irish school friend Biddy with him on his yacht *Fair Wind,* it was to be a pleasant, lazy cruise in the Mediterranean.

But off the coast of Portugal things began to happen. They rescued from a gang of rogues a young Spaniard who confided to them the secret of the ivory wingless gull that his enemies were trying to steal from him — and then the captain and his two young charges found themselves off on a treasure hunt as exciting as any in olden days.

Things happened so that they were forced to avoid both criminals and police, and the result was a series of breathless adventures in Spain and Portugal before the two schoolgirls and the captain finally outwitted their enemies.

## KATTIE OF THE BALKANS

F. O. H. NASH

Slight, shy Kattie Ilieff came from her Balkan home of Silaria to school at St. Cecilia's. Her life in England seemed so dull that on an impulse Bunnie Cooter, Second in the Guide Patrol Kattie had joined, invited her to spend three weeks of the summer holiday with her.

All went well until the two girls arrived at the Guide camp where they were spending part of the holiday. Here Bunnie was mistaken for Kattie, and thus began an amazing adventure which took Bunnie far away into the wilds of Silaria — captive in a strange land.

## THE SECRET PAGODA

MARGARET RUTHIN

When Ruth Mortimer left England to join her father on a small island off Burma, she regarded the voyage as a great adventure. Little did she imagine that within a few hours of the longed-for reunion, she would be involved in a series of really perilous adventures.

Together with two native servants, Ruth was marooned on a tiny island, where two ex-officers of the defeated Japanese army were jealously guarding stolen treasure. Ruth's attempt to escape was foiled when she and her companions encountered a band of pirates who were also anxious to obtain the jewels. The white girl's resourcefulness proved too much for the Japanese, and the leader of the pirates, who was forced to admire Ruth's brave spirit, was able to repay the girl who saved his life.

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